

STARS AND STRIPES®

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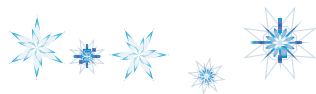
Bomber in Mosul likely wore Iraqi military uniform

U.S. investigating how attack was carried out on base Page 3



THE PADUCAH (KY.) SUN/AP

In Golconda, Ill., kids slide down a neighborhood slope Wednesday after the winter's first snowfall.



Across U.S.,
frosty weather
brings snow, fun,
travel headaches

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**To our readers:
Stars and Stripes will not
be printed on Christmas
Day. Look for the next
edition on Dec. 26.**

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Nation

Martha Stewart message: Martha Stewart, in a Christmas message posted on her personal Web site, called for sentencing reform and took a swipe at the "bad food" in prison.

Stewart, who is roughly halfway through a five-month sentence for lying about a stock sale, urged fans to think about the women she has met in prison who are "devoid of care, devoid of love, devoid of family."

She suggested Americans should push for reforms in federal sentencing guidelines for nonviolent first-time offenders and particularly for drug offenders, who she said would be better served by rehabilitation than prison.



Stewart

Eric Rudolph case: A judge has ordered the government to show serial bombing suspect Eric Rudolph's defense any bomb recipes or sketches that it plans to use in his federal death penalty trial.

U.S. Magistrate Judge T. Michael Putnam, ruling on a series of defense motions Tuesday, said the government would not have to produce any bomb replicas or mock-ups that were put together in the investigation and were not "final" versions.

Rudolph's federal death penalty trial in the bombing is scheduled next year. He also is charged in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombing that killed a woman and two other blasts in Atlanta in 1997.

Severed arms report: A mother charged with killing her 10-month-old daughter by cutting off her arms tried to commit suicide the day after giving birth at home, according to a newspaper report citing medical records.

The Dallas Morning News reported in Thursday editions that medical records it obtained showed Dena Schlosser, 35, cut her wrist Jan. 10 and was treated at an emergency room.

Doctors at three hospitals determined that she was psychotic or suffering from psychosis in addition to postpartum depression, the records showed.

Blake trial testimony: Robert Blake laughed and smiled as he dined with his wife the night she was shot, the restaurant's owner testified at the "Baretta" star's murder trial. Benny Lee Bakley was shot May 4, 2001, after dining at Vitello's restaurant. Blake maintains he left Bakley in the car to go back into Vitello's to retrieve a handgun he carried for protection and returned to find her bleeding.

A doctor testified he heard the actor calling out that his wife was bleeding and needed help, but said he did not offer assistance because he thought Blake's cries were insincere.

Tobacco payments: A tobacco-quota buy-out approved by Congress this year releases cigarette companies from making payments to farmers in 14 states that had been required by a landmark 1998 settlement, a North Carolina judge ruled Wednesday.

The millions of dollars in Phase Two payments have compensated tobacco growers for losses they were expected to suffer under higher cigarette prices resulting from the agreement between tobacco companies and the states.



El Gordo Christmas lottery: Cristóbal Ortega, center, owner of a bar in Lorca, Spain, celebrates Wednesday after he and several of his customers won a part of the top prize of Spain's El Gordo (Fat One) Christmas lottery, the richest in the world, with the number 54600. The Gordo uses a complex system of shared numbers that divides wealth among millions of people holding numbers that go from 00001 to 66000.

Cigarette companies contend they weren't obligated to make a final \$189 million payment this month to farmers because Congress approved a \$10.1 billion tobacco buy-out this fall. North Carolina Business Court Judge Ben Tennille agreed and also ruled that the companies should get a refund on payments made earlier this year.

Priest shot by accused: A priest facing trial next month for allegedly molesting a former altar boy who later shot him has been defrocked by Pope John Paul II, The Associated Press has learned.

Maurice Blackwell, 58, is scheduled to go on trial Jan. 3 on four counts of child sexual abuse against Dontee Stokes.

Blackwell was shot by Stokes in May 2002, in the midst of the national scandal involving Catholic priests. In the aftermath, Baltimore prosecutors reviewed Stokes' allegations and charged the priest with molesting Stokes.

He served a sentence of home detention.

Military

Raptor crash: An Air Force general said that he expects the F/A-22 Raptor to join combat operations by the end of next year despite this week's crash of one of the next-generation stealth fighter jets.

"We're going to keep right on going," Maj. Gen. Stephen M. Goldfinch, the Air Warfare Center commander at Nellis, where the approximately \$1.3 billion jet went down on a runway shortly after takeoff Monday.

The pilot suffered scrapes but was otherwise unharmed.

War on terrorism

Soldier charged: A judge on Wednesday ordered a soldier, his wife and her cousin to stand trial in an alleged plot to keep the enlist-

ed man out of Iraq by shooting him in the leg. Prosecutors said Army Spc. Marquise J. Roberts; his wife, Donna Roberts; and her cousin, Roland Fuller, had originally planned to find someone to do it undertake the shooting but decided to do it themselves when they got no takers.

Marquise Roberts, 23, a supply specialist who had spent seven months in Iraq, was distraught about having to return to combat duty and wanted to stay with his family, authorities said.

Military officials have said that Roberts could face military discipline if the charges prove to be true.

World

Spain bombings complaint: The Islamic Commission of Spain has asked the parliamentary panel probing the Madrid train bombings to refrain from referring to terrorists as "Islamic" or "Islamist," the leading daily El País said Thursday.

"Unfortunately, [these terms] are used too frequently in political, journalistic and editorial circles, almost on a daily basis, creating a public opinion of social, anti-Islamic alarm," the group's leader Ria Tataray said in a letter sent to the parliamentary commission.

He said several Muslims, including an imam, were killed in the March 11 attacks.

Ireland bank robbery: The outlawed Irish Republican Army denied involvement Thursday in this week's massive raid on the Northern Bank in Belfast.

In a message issued to Belfast media, the IRA said its members played no role in Monday's robbery, when a large and well-organized gang stole more than 22 million pounds from the bank's main underground vault.

Stories and photos from wire services

Note to readers

Tom Philpott's "Military Update" column will not be in this edition. It will appear in the Dec. 26 edition instead.

**Comics, horoscopes and advice
every day in Stars and Stripes**

Bomber may have worn Iraqi air force uniform

By MATT KELLEY

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. commander in northern Iraq, Brig. Gen. Carter Ham, said Thursday that the suicide bomber who killed 13 U.S. servicemen in Mosul on Tuesday likely was wearing an Iraqi military uniform.

Tuesday's explosion killed 22 people, injured scores more and put Pentagon officials on the defense against new criticism of holes in the protections for troops in Iraq.

Speaking to CNN on Thursday, Ham said the investigation into the bombing was continuing.

"We don't know exactly how it happened. ... In [the investigators'] very best judgment, the explosion was caused by a device that was inside the facility. The question now turns to, 'How did that happen?'"

"What we think is likely ... is that an individual in an Iraqi military uniform, possibly with a vest-worn explosive device, was inside the facility, and detonated the facility, causing this tragedy," Ham said.

Ham was questioned as to what steps he was taking to recheck people entering the base.

"I think we have a good procedure to do

Force-protection procedures come under scrutiny after Mosul attack

that, but clearly in this instance, I failed to identify some shortcoming that allowed this to occur. That's why we're doing the investigation, to find out: Where was it that these murderers were able to exploit?"

Ham conceded that the attack was effective.

"It is an enemy success, and they are clearly using that ... as a rallying call."

Ham said he was concerned that the bombing could be used as a recruiting tool and the chance that other individuals would attempt "copycat attacks."

The attack inside a U.S. Army mess hall represents a breach of the most basic principles of military security and points to significant weaknesses in the screening of Iraqis who are allowed onto the base, experts say.

"This is an incredible occurrence, that someone could have come in undetected with some kind of bomb," said Mitch Mitchell, a retired Army officer who helps design security training for the military. "It blows my mind that force protection on the base is that poor."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defended U.S. troop security in Iraq, saying it was "an enormous challenge to provide force protection."

"They have to be right 100 percent of the time," he said at a Wednesday press conference. "An attacker only has to be right occasionally."

Mitchell and other experts said it was obvious the military was not taking basic protective actions for U.S. troops in Iraq. On most bases, troops have their meals in large dining hall tents like the one attacked Tuesday, for example, instead of in small, scattered groups. That presents a tempting target for insurgents, Mitchell said.

"It shows you the level at which force protection was addressed on that base, and it wasn't very high," said Mitchell, an analyst with the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the military's National Defense University.

The explosion was the deadliest single attack on U.S. forces since the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

A radical Sunni Muslim group, the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Infiltration of insurgents onto U.S. military bases has been a concern for some time at Iraq, particularly because of the fighters' ability to penetrate the Iraqi security forces.

For example, the former police chief in Mosul was arrested by Kurdish forces last month after a wave of insurgent violence in the city. Kurdish officials said the former chief had turned over some police stations to insurgents. At the time of the November violence, U.S. military spokesmen said they believed some Mosul police officers were working with the insurgents.

Besides Iraqi soldiers and other security officers, Iraqis enter U.S. bases as workers for the civilian contractors which handle functions such as food service, laundry and trash collection.

Weeding out insurgents from those workers should be a priority, said military analyst Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution think tank.

"We have to work with Iraqis, and employing them has to be part of any reconstruction plan. So we will be vulnerable, and we don't want to have dozens of people vulnerable at the same time," he said.

Stripes editor Pat Dickson contributed to this report from Washington.

Fighting in Fallujah as residents trickle back

By NICK WADHAM

The Associated Press

FALLUJAH, Iraq — U.S. Marines battled insurgents in Fallujah on Thursday, with warplanes dropping bombs and tanks shelling suspected guerrilla positions in the heaviest fighting to date, erupting as the first residents returned to the devastated city. At least three Marines were killed in the area, the military said.

The fighting was the heaviest in Fallujah since Dec. 10, when seven Marines, three Iraqi troops and about 50 insurgents were killed. The former insurgent stronghold has seen sporadic violence, including artillery and small-arms fire, since the United States secured it in a weeklong offensive last month.

F-18 fighter-bombers were seen striking at targets in the city's outskirts. Tank and artillery fire also was heard.

U.S. officials said Marines and insurgents were killed in the Fallujah fighting. A military spokesman said three Marines were killed in action Thursday in Anbar province, which surrounds Fallujah.

American commanders have hailed the November offensive to retake Fallujah as a major tactical victory. But pockets of insurgents remain in the city — and violence elsewhere in Iraq has escalated since the capture of Fallujah, after many guerrillas apparently slipped out of Fallujah to operate in central and northern Iraq.

U.S. forces suffered the deadliest attack on one of their bases, when a blast Tuesday ripped through a din-



A man argues with a U.S. and Iraqi soldiers as he waits to be allowed to enter Fallujah on Thursday, as the first of the town's 300,000 residents who fled last month's U.S.-led offensive started returning.

ing tent at a base near Mosul, killing 22 people — mostly Americans.

A U.S. soldier also was killed Thursday by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, the military said. The deaths raised the number of U.S. troops who have died since the start of the war in March 2003 to at least 1,325, according to an unofficial count by The Associated Press.

The new Fallujah fighting came as the first group of returning residents lined up at checkpoints into the city, brandishing documents to prove to Iraqi policemen that they had the right to enter. Once in the city, returnees visited the remains of bombed-out and looted homes they fled — along with most of Fallujah's population of approximately 250,000 people.

"This is all that's left of my property," one man said, waving a dusty blanket. In footage by Associated Press Television News, the corpse of an elderly woman was visible in one destroyed house, lying face down in her black robe. It was not clear how long ago she was killed.

The return of the tens of thousands

of residents who have been crowded into camps or living with relatives in Baghdad and elsewhere is a key part of attempts to restore and rebuild Fallujah, particularly with Jan. 30 elections approaching. U.S. and Iraqi officials have been organizing a stage-by-stage return to prevent a flood of people — while at the same time dealing with the persistent clashes with insurgents still in the city.

Authorities had planned on Thursday to allow the return of 2,000 residents, all from a small Fallujah neighborhood called Andalus, a generally commercial district. By the afternoon, only about 200 actually made the trip, some on foot, according to U.S. officials.

Lt. Col. Kevin Hansen, the Fallujah operations officer with the Marines' 4th Civil Affairs unit, said residents may not be aware of the return and that more may come on Friday after announcements during weeklong prayers at mosques.

"Most of them get their information from the mosques, so we think that tomorrow they'll get the word out more," he said.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,321 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is 20 higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Wednesday. The military has not yet included fatalities from Tuesday's attack on a dining hall near Mosul, Iraq.

The British military has reported 75 deaths: Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,183 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 912 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A Marine died in a vehicle accident Tuesday in Iraq's Anbar province.

The latest identifications reported by military officials and Maine Gov. John Baldacci:

■ Army Spc. Thomas John Dostie, 20, Somerville, Maine, and Army Sgt. Lynn Robert Poulin Sr., 47, Freedom, Maine; killed Tuesday in an attack on a mess hall near Mosul, Iraq; assigned to Headquarters Company, 133rd Engineer Battalion, Maine Army National Guard.

■ Army Spc. 1st Class Paul D. Karpowich, 30, Bridgeport, Pa.; killed Tuesday in an attack on a mess hall near Mosul, Iraq; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 417th Regiment, 1st Brigade, 98th Division, Pennsauken, N.J.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Neil D. Petsche, 21, Lena, Ill.; died Tuesday after a non-hostile vehicle incident in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif.

■ Army Staff Sgt. Donald B. Farmer, 33, Zion, Ill., and Army Spc. Berry K. Meza, 23, League City, Texas; died Sunday in Shuaybah, Kuwait, when a vehicle struck them; assigned to the 180th Transportation Battalion, 13th Corps Support Command, Fort Hood, Texas.

Wounded from Mosul attack expected to recover

By BEN MURRAY

Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Officials at the U.S. military's primary medical hub for troops wounded in Iraq said Thursday that all soldiers and civilians sent to the hospital after Tuesday's deadly attack on a dining area near Mosul, Iraq, are expected to survive, and most to fully recover.

By midday Thursday, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center had received 35 people hurt in the attack, at least seven of them civilians and 17 of whom are still in critical condition, said the hospital's commander, Col. Rhonda Cornum.

Cornum said she did not yet have an accurate count of how many civilians had come in on a flight that arrived Thursday morning, or which U.S. contractors they worked for in Iraq.

The hospital began receiving patients early Wednesday morning following an explosion that tore through a U.S. mess tent crowded with soldiers, civilian workers and Iraqi security forces. The blast killed 22 people, including 13 U.S. soldiers. Seventy people were injured in the attack, which military officials say was caused by an improvised explosive device.

Cornum said Landstuhl has already moved some of the wounded, including six critical cases, to Army medical centers in the United States, and expects the majority of the remaining patients to arrive at state-side hospitals by Monday.



Courtesy of the Air Force

An unidentified soldier is removed from an ambulance by medical personnel during a snow storm at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany on Wednesday evening. The servicemember was wounded in an attack on a dining facility in Mosul, Iraq.

The hospital is trying to get as many of the troops to U.S. hospitals by Christmas Day, Cornum said. Military officials even added an extra flight out of Germany on Saturday to get the wounded closer to their families for the holiday.

The bombing, which created the largest rush of patients to the hospital from any single attack since the start of the war, produced a multitude of injuries rarely seen by Landstuhl doctors, Cornum said.

Many troops had neck, chest and abdomen wounds, which are normally protected against in IED attacks by body armor. Wounds suffered by those hurt in the explosion made it clear that they were caught unprepared for an attack when they sat down to eat lunch Tuesday, she said.

"It was obvious that these people were not wearing their battle armor," said Cornum, who had performed a surgery herself Thursday morning.

U.S. "battle rattle" generally deflects serious wounds to the torso and results in injuries to the arms and legs, she said, though there were "a couple of amputations," among the wounded at Landstuhl.

None of the injuries seen at the hospital, however, provided any insight into the type of device used in the attack, which Pentagon officials said Wednesday they suspected was a suicide bombing.

Most patients arriving at the facility had already undergone surgery at medical centers in Iraq or Kuwait before being stabilized for the flight to Germany, and evidence of their original wounds has generally been "obliterated by the time they are here," Cornum said.

"It's hard to say what the injury looked like when they started," she said.

The rush of patients and the high percentage of critical cases flown to the hospital just before Christmas put a strain on Landstuhl medical workers, though they met the challenge with poise, Cornum said.

Hospital staff, which has treated more than 21,500 troops for all types of injuries since U.S. military operations began in Afghanistan in 2001, worked extra hours to care for the wounded. Medical teams around the region were kept on two-hour alert in case more were needed.

As of Thursday afternoon, no further patients with battle injuries from the Mosul attack were expected to arrive at Landstuhl, Cornum said.

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Families remember those killed in Mosul

The Associated Press

The small community of Freehold, Pa., lost its holiday spirit after learning that Sgt. 1st Class Paul D. Karpowich was killed in the bombing at Mosul, Iraq.

"You expect to see people walking down the street wishing each other a merry Christmas," Freehold Mayor Tim Martin said Wednesday as the word of Karpowich's death spread. "People were asking, 'Did you hear what happened?' It was a very somber mood."

Eighteen Americans were among the 22 killed in Tuesday's attack — 13 servicemembers and five civilians — making it one of the deadliest attacks on American troops since the war began. The military said it was widely carried out by a suicide bomber who infiltrated the camp's dining tent as soldiers ate lunch.

Karpowich, 30, grew up in Freehold, but had been living in the Philadelphia suburb of Bridgeport, Pa., and worked as a salesman.

The avid hunter and fisherman had spent 13 years in the military. His wife, Mason, recalled his son Nicholas, 20, of King George, Va., a former volunteer firefighter serving in the Virginia National Guard, had been scheduled to return home in February.

"Anybody that knew him would have a lot of special memories,"



Peggy Dostie, center, and Mike Dostie, top right, stand outside the Somerville, Maine, firehouse Wednesday night during a candlelight vigil in honor of their late son, Somerville firefighter and Army Spc. Thomas Dostie. Dostie, 20, was among 22 people killed during an attack at the U.S. base in Mosul, Iraq.

Mason said. "He was proud to be a soldier, proud to serve his country."

In Texas, family and friends of Halliburton Co. employees Leslie W. Davis, 53, and Allen Smith, 45, gathered in grief.

In Magnolia, Texas, Dona Davis recalled her high school sweetheart and husband of 35 years, who worked at the quality assurance and quality control department for Halliburton's KBR subsidiary.

She last spoke to her husband by phone Monday night. "He said he would rather die than one of those young soldiers, without a doubt. He said, 'I have a chance to leave, but they don't.'"

Friends of Smith gathered Wednesday night at Johnson's Market & Grill in Pearland, Texas, to mourn the passing of "a good man and wonderful friend."

Smith, of Rosharon, Texas, previously owned a landscaping and lawn-care business.

In Maine, friends described Army Sgt. Lynn R. Poulis Sr., 47, of Freedom, as a down-to-earth, friendly who'd do just about anything to help out.

Word of the death of Army Spc. Thomas Dostie, 20, spread swiftly across the tiny Maine town of Somerville, where Dostie was a volunteer firefighter and son the town's fire chief.

The Navy confirmed the death of Builder Chief Petty Officer Joel E. Baldwin, 37, who served in a construction battalion. He was based in Gulfport, Miss.

Anthony Stramiello Jr., 61, was working as a Halliburton contractor when he died. He was a carpentry foreman on construction projects.

Troops reflect on attack that killed 22 comrades

By JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Unsettling as it is, most U.S. troops understand, if not accept, the possibility of being wounded or killed in direct combat.

But in the wake of the deadly strike on a base dining facility near Mosul, soldiers are talking more than ever about what amounts to a lucky shot, or worse.

Random mortars and rockets hit U.S. bases throughout Iraq. More often than not, they land harmlessly in empty spots inside the wire.

"But if just one of those hits a trailer or a [Tactical Operations Center] or a chow hall, what are you going to do?" said Sgt. Charles Carter, a 24-year-old 1st Cavalry Division soldier stationed at Camp Liberty, formerly called Camp Victory.

"You can be wearing full battle rattle, or you can be standing in your towel shaving. If it's going to hit you, it's going to hit you," Carter said.

"I don't mean to sound heartless about it, but it's something that you can't think about too much."

The same goes, he said, for the roadside bombs and car bombs that have become one of the main threats to servicemembers in Iraq.

Now with military officials saying a suicide bomber was

the likely cause of the Mosul blast, soldiers say they are another tactic to consider.

By Wednesday, new uniform regulations were in place at bases throughout Iraq. Soldiers and civilians at Camp Liberty, for instance, said they were ordered to wear their helmets and body armor outdoors at all times. Many people wore their body armor the whole time they were in the dining facilities.

Outside one large chow hall, soldiers increased scrutiny of people entering and directed servicemembers and civilians out of a patio-like area routinely used as a smoking spot after meals.

"Sorry for the inconvenience," said one of the soldiers on duty. "You all know what happened yesterday. It's for your own safety."

On Camp Liberty, officials had already been enforcing strict rules against taking things into and out of the dining facilities. Soldiers had previously joked that the measure was meant to keep them from smuggling extra drinks or food out.

Most weren't joking any more.

"The thing in Mosul is what everyone's afraid of, but hopes never happens," said Spc. John Stack of the 10th Mountain Division, also at Camp Liberty. "Was it a lucky shot? If so, there's no more anyone could have done."

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Promotion tracks split for Reserve and Guard

By LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Reserve and National Guard officers will soon have separate promotion tracks instead of competing against one another.

Beginning in January, the Army will have three separate promotion categories for reserve component officers: a list for National Guard officers, a list for Army Reserve officers and a third list for Army Reserve officers assigned to active duty, said Lt. Col. Wanda Walker, a personnel policy integrator for reserve component promotions.

The old Army Promotion List grouped together all Guard and Reserve officers except for chaplains and Army Medical Department officers, who have their own promotion systems, according to Army personnel officials.

But that system led to a disproportionate promotion selection rate for the Army's 3,500 Reserve officers who were assigned to active duty status: about 90 percent, as compared to their regular Reserve and National Guard brethren, who have been pro-

moted in the 70 percent to 80 percent range, Walker said Wednesday.

The number of Reserve officers who can be assigned to active duty is capped by Congress.

Although some Army personnel officials said the old system worked well because "the best-quality officers were getting promoted... basically, the system wasn't fair," Walker said.

That's because Reserve and Guard officers who may work only a few weeks each year were being compared to officers who do their jobs full-time, she said.

The new system, however, "will level the playing field," because officers "will be looked at against the same kinds of officers," Walker said.

Once the changes to the promotion system for the larger groups of reserve component officers is up and running, personnel officials plan to institute a similar system for reserve component chaplains and Medical Department officers.

The plan is to start that new promotion system starting in fiscal 2006, or next October.

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Giving the gift of warmth



MICHAEL SHELLEY/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

Barry McKelvey, a contractor working at Bagram Air Base, passes out winter clothing to children at an orphanage in Charikar, Afghanistan. The clothing was purchased with money donated through the Air Force's 455th Air Expeditionary Wing flag-flying program, in which flags that flew over the air traffic control tower are sent to private organizations and individuals in exchange for donations. The program has raised \$300 since September and was used to guarantee that more than 300 orphans will receive warm winter shoes.

Chaplains in Iraq try to keep Christmas special

By RON JENSEN
Stars and Stripes

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — The 2,500 members of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing at Balad Air Base will celebrate Christmas this year.

The chaplains will see to that. And any airman saddened by thoughts of loved ones far away can find comfort.

The chaplains will take care of that.

Anyone struggling to cope with the dangers of living in a country teeming with death need not do so alone.

That's in the chaplains' playbook, as well.

"It's the most rewarding ministry there is," said Chaplain (Capt.) Quentin Collins, an Air National Guard chaplain from Oklahoma City.

He was speaking of ministering to deployed troops, in this case, those in Balad. Five Air Force chaplains are everywhere around the air base — on the flight line, in the maintenance shops and strolling through the hospital wards.

The ministry is different from the one at home, simpler in some ways and more difficult in others. "It's more focused because we are only dealing with the troops," said Chaplain (Capt.) Efrén Adversario. There is no youth ministry to prepare. No family sessions.

But deployed troops have a greater need for a chaplain's time.

Chaplain (Maj.) Donnette Boyd, from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., said airmen at their home base release some of their stress with their families, complaining to a spouse about work or something similar.

"They don't get the opportunity



RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Chaplain (Capt.) Quentin Collins holds Christmas stockings sent to members of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing at Balad Air Base, Iraq, during tree-lighting ceremonies recently at the base. Making Christmas special is one of the duties of the Air Force chaplains in Iraq.

to do that here," Boyd said. "We sort of replace their families. We become, maybe, like a mom or dad."

Air Force members, with a few exceptions, deploy for four months, not as long as the year-long stints endured by soldiers, but long enough for fears and worries to set in.

"They scrutinize their lives with a new set of questions in a place like this," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gary Brooks, wing chaplain. More people may seek

one-on-one counseling in a deployed location than back home, the chaplains said.

"It seems like at first, we dealt more with people's fear of death," he said, a consequence of moving to Balad. Balad is attached to Logistics Support Area Anaconda, the base that is attacked more by mortars and rockets than any other in Iraq.

As airman adjusted to that, they wanted to talk about the stresses of their jobs, he said. Now, they are thinking of back

home and missing their families as their deployments near an end.

Because families are absent, the chaplains have more time for the troops.

"They're all very proactive at unit visitation," said Brooks, speaking about his colleagues. "They do that in the daytime. They do that in the evening to catch the other shift."

The visits are informal affairs, simple drop-bys to gauge the morale and the attitude of the wing's members. They said it is not uncommon for them to be approached by an airman who has never before talked to a chaplain.

They also make regular visits to forward operating bases where airmen are stationed. When they do this, a chaplain's assistant accompanies them.

"The chaplain's assistant carries the weapon and ammunition because a chaplain does not," said Brooks, who is stationed at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.

Brooks said the deployed chaplain's assistants have a greater role than back at the home base. There is less administrative work, but more direct support of the chaplain's increased efforts.

"Plus, a chaplain's assistant can interact more with the troops at a level a chaplain cannot," he said, providing greater insight into the wing.

These chaplains, including Chaplain (Capt.) Martin Adamson, are busy now preparing for Christmas.

Brooks said it was decided early on that they would provide as many familiar holiday touches as possible to ease the holiday separation.

That began two weeks ago with a ceremony to light the "tallest Christmas tree in Iraq," by Brooks' estimation. Carolers were to stroll around the base. Decorations are everywhere.

Activities will culminate on Christmas Day when the wing will gather and everyone will receive a gift from people back home, many from total strangers. Word of the chaplains' Operation Christmas Cheer spread throughout the States and gifts have been coming in.

"They'll be spending Christmas together," said Boyd. "They won't be in their pod sulking."

The chaplains haven't forgotten others sharing the base with them. Many workers are from places such as the Philippines, India and Nepal.

Operation Useful Surplus will provide them with a Christmas tidings.

Adversario, who is of Filipino heritage, said he saw some of the workers going through trash bins, finding useful items tossed away by Americans heading home.

For weeks now, people have been donating items they don't want to pack for the trip home.

"I was amazed," said Adversario. "People were giving good stuff. German chocolates. Blankets."

Despite the special demands on their time, the chaplains still give sermons, lead Bible studies and hold prayer meetings. Boyd led a class on world religions.

The chaplains spend time with recently wounded troops. When U.S. troops attacked insurgents in Fallujah, the hospital at the base was swamped with wounded.

Adversario, who is the full-time chaplain at the hospital, summoned his colleagues to the wards where they held the hands of wounded soldiers and Marines, prayed with them and reassured them.

"There's no prerequisite for that," said Collins. "It's just trust in God and trust in faith."

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensenr@stripes.com

Rumsfeld 'truly saddened' by criticism

Defense secretary offers passionate defense of himself against critics' recent thoughts

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, stung by criticism that he's insensitive to the needs of the troops and their families, offered his most impassioned defense Wednesday, saying he is "truly saddened" that anyone could doubt his commitment to the welfare of U.S. troops.



Rumsfeld

The normally stoic Rumsfeld said when he meets wounded soldiers or relatives of those killed in battle, "my grief is something I feel to my core."

"I am truly saddened by the thought that anyone could have the impression that I, or others here, are doing anything other than working urgently to see that the lives of the

fighting men and women are protected and are cared for in every way humanly possible," he said.

"And I hope and pray that every family member of those who have died so bravely knows how deeply I feel their loss."

Rumsfeld has been a lightning rod since the war began in March 2003, but criticism recently intensified after a Tennessee National Guardsman in Kuwait asked him during a question-and-answer session with soldiers on Dec. 8 why he and his comrades had to scrounge for armor to protect their vehicles.

Rumsfeld gave an extended answer that included the statement, "You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have."

Critics called the response insensitive and castigated him for not doing more to prepare the U.S. military for the Iraqi invasion and its aftermath.

The following week, some Republicans joined Democrats in voicing dissatisfaction

with Rumsfeld.

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, said he had "no confidence" in Rumsfeld, citing the defense secretary's handling of the war and the failure to send more troops. Sen. Trent Lott, a Missouri Republican, said he believes Rumsfeld should be gone within a year. Neither directly called for his resignation.

The defense secretary was criticized again last weekend when it was reported that he did not personally sign letters of condolence to the families of dead soldiers, but instead relied on a mechanical device to affix his signature. He immediately abandoned the practice.

"My goodness, that's the least that we could expect of the secretary of defense, is having some personal attention paid by him," Sen. Chuck Hagel, a Nebraska Republican, said Sunday.

The next day, President Bush defended Rumsfeld, who has agreed to stay on for Bush's second term, saying his defense sec-

retary was "doing a very fine job."

A CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll released Monday found 52 percent of respondents believe Rumsfeld should resign, and 41 percent approve of his job performance. People were evenly split on Rumsfeld's performance in May, but most approved of his handling of the job about a year ago.

On Wednesday, Rumsfeld said, "I and I know others, stay awake at night for concern for those at risk, with hope for their lives, for their success. And I want those who matter most, the men and women in uniform and their families, to know that. And I want them to know that we consider them, the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the Marines, to be America's true treasure. And I thank them and I thank their families."

Asked whether the criticism had undermined his ability to do his job, he said, "You get up in the morning and you think about what our troops are doing. And I must say, if they can do what they're doing, I can do what I'm doing."

Virtual reunion allows airmen to meet family

BY STEPHEN SINGER

The Associated Press

CHICOPEE, Mass. — Air Force reservists from Connecticut and Massachusetts got an early Christmas gift Wednesday, taking a break from wartime duties in southwest Asia to reconnect with their families in a video teleconference.

The families of six reservists gathered in a conference room at Westover Air Reserve Base, where a television showed their loved ones in an undisclosed location. Another television brought the images of the loved ones to the reservists.

Master Sgt. Gerard Leamy of Manchester, Conn., told his wife he was not crying as he brushed aside something on his cheek. He claimed it was dust.

Leamy, a mail carrier who has been overseas since September, said the Christmas season has not yet reached the war zone.

"Out here, it's just another day," he said. "On Christmas, we'll realize it."

His wife, Joyce, said she has "a lot to deal with as a single parent at home."

"We're not used to doing this kind of stuff as regular people," Joyce Leamy said.

Intimacy was nonexistent for the families as news reports crowded into the conference room at the start of one teleconference.

"Oh my gosh," Joyce Leamy said upon seeing her husband's image on TV. "It's amazing. Say something," she commanded her husband.

"Merry Christmas," he replied.

For the airmen, whose location was not disclosed by the Air Force for security purposes, it was a chance to communicate with their wives and children in a more familiar format than e-mails.

Tracy Savoie of Springfield said she and her husband, Tech Sgt. Craig Savoie, e-mail each other nearly every day.

"I'm lucky enough," she said. "His job is working on a computer. It's pretty nice."

The mission of the servicemen, who are assigned to the 58th Aerial Port Squadron from the 439th Airlift Wing, is to conduct air transportation processing and handle cargo and passengers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. They are expected to return home next month, the Air Force said.

Ex-AF lawyer gets more punishment

Fiscus ordered to forfeit some pay, may lose retirement benefits

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Air Force's recently dismissed top military lawyer was reprimanded further Wednesday and ordered to forfeit some of his pay for carrying on inappropriate relationships and committing other violations of the military code.

Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Fiscus was cited for conduct unbecoming an officer, fraternization, obstruction of justice and violating a lawful general regulation, the Air Force said in a statement. He was

punished outside of the court-martial process.

"The swift and strong actions of Air Force leadership make it clear that such misconduct will not be tolerated, regardless of the rank of the offender," the statement said.

An Air Force official who would speak only on condition of anonymity said an investigation determined Fiscus conducted this series of relationships, some of which were sexual, with women over several years. Some involved subordinates, leading to the fraternization charge, the official said.

Fiscus plans to retire. Gen. Donald G. Cook, the commander of the Air Education and Training Command who has been responsible for the Fiscus case, recommended Fiscus retire below his current rank, meaning he could lose some retirement benefits. His status as an attorney may also face review.

Fiscus, an Air Force Academy graduate, had been the service's justice advocate general since February 2002. He had about 1,600 lawyers under his command.

He was relieved, at his request, on Sept. 22, when the investigation into his conduct began.

Troop's effort to help unit not accepted

MORGAN HILL, Calif. — An unusual flap has erupted between an Army Reserve unit and an Iraq-bound reservist who hopes to raise money for military equipment he wants to bring to the war zone.

Sean Flynn, 18, planned to buy extra equipment for himself and his friends by selling his San Francisco 49ers memorabilia, including a commemorative football and a jersey autographed by Jerry Rice.

Those plans ballooned into a full-blown fund-raising effort organized by a local sports store to better equip Flynn's whole unit — an effort that has angered military brass.

When news of the plan reached the unit — the Mountain View-based 445th Civil Affairs Battalion — officials insisted its soldiers had all the computer equipment and armor they needed.

From The Associated Press

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IN THE STATES

Ex-governor pleads guilty in corruption case

BY MATT APUZZO
AND JOHN CHRISTOFFERSON
The Associated Press

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Former Gov. John G. Rowland, driven from office by a corruption scandal, pleaded guilty Thursday to a single federal charge that carries a sentence of up to five years in prison.

After reaching a deal with prosecutors, Rowland pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to steal honest service, a felony that also carries a possible \$250,000 fine.

The plea deal ends the two-year-long investigation into corruption in the administration of Rowland, who resigned July 1 after 9½ years in office. Rowland's lawyer, William F. Dow III, acknowledged the former governor was "the recipient of certain gratuities."

Former Conn. Gov. Rowland could face up to five years in prison

Prosecutors told the judge that Rowland accepted \$107,000 worth of vacations, work on his cottage and free flights from state contractors and others.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Nora Dannhaey said the single charge also involves a conspiracy to defraud the Internal Revenue Service.

U.S. District Judge Peter Dorsey advised Rowland that as a convicted felon he would not be able to vote or hold public office.

"There was an effort being made to deprive Connecticut citizens of the honest services of its officials," Dorsey said.

Federal guidelines call for a sentence of 15 to 21 months in prison, the lawyers involved said. Sentencing was set for March. In addition to the possible sentence and fine, prosecutors said he could be forced to pay more than \$35,000 to the IRS in unpaid taxes and interest.

"Obviously mistakes have been made throughout the last few years, and I accept responsibility for those," Rowland told reporters after entering the plea. "But I also ask the people of this state to appreciate and understand what we have tried to do over the past 25 years in public service."

The written plea agreement does not require Rowland to testify against others.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell, who took office after Rowland stepped down, said she felt "deep personal disappointment."

Rowland, 47, was once one of the GOP's rising young stars. He became engulfed in scandal in December 2003 when he admitted accepting renovations at his lakeside cottage — including a hot tub and new heating system from employees and state contractors — and lying about it. Other gifts and favors soon came to light.

Rowland resigned amid legislative hearings that threatened to lead to his impeachment. Rell will file the remainder of his term, which expires after the November 2006 elections.

Airports to adjust pat-down procedures

BY SIOBHAN MCDONOUGH
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In response to numerous complaints from women, the government has ordered airport security personnel to avoid touching female passengers between their breasts when performing patdowns.

Security screeners now will keep their hands to the "chest perimeter" of women unless detection equipment picks up the possibility that they are hiding explosives between their breasts.

The new method takes into consideration passenger discomfort while remaining steadfast in mitigating risks, said Transportation Security Administration spokesman Mark Hatfield.

The nation's 45,000 screeners are being told to pat down the perimeter of the chest, backside and abdomen, effective Thursday.

TSA has made other modifications. Last week it began allowing passengers to lower their arms after the first part of a search so they can be more comfortable.

Women have complained about the intrusiveness of the searches.

Roughly 2 million passengers a week are being patted down. Some are searched this way after setting off metal detectors twice; others are chosen by computer.

The government has directed airport screeners to carry out more frequent, more thorough searches for explosives. That policy was instituted Sept. 22, after 90 people were killed in two plane crashes in Russia believed to have been caused by Chechen women who carried explosives on board.

For female passengers, screeners would use the back of the hand to pat down the center line of the chest and follow the bra line below the breast.



Don Wilmoth uses a snow blower to clear over eight inches of snow in front of his home in Columbus, Ind., Wednesday. Heavy snow fell Wednesday morning across southern and central Indiana in the first wave of a winter wallop that was expected to dump as much as a foot of snow in some places.

Frigid temperatures disrupt travel

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
The Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Frigid temperatures, blasting wind and more snow than some places normally see in a year left parts of the Midwest and South paralyzed Thursday, and transformed a section of highway in southern Indiana into a parking lot.

The winter storm dumped double-digits of snow from Ohio to Wyoming, the Texas Panhandle to the Great Lakes, disrupting pre-Christmas travel. Motorists in parts of Mississippi and Tennessee were warned Thursday to stay off highways iced up from freezing rain. Hundreds of thousands lost power in Ohio.

"We're still stuck here. It's been about 13 hours," Ken Sabatini, 52, of Leawood, Kan., said Thursday morning. He, his wife and two children were traveling to Cincinnati for Christmas. "It's cold outside and we're doing our best to stay inside the car."

Temperatures fell to 12 degrees overnight, and Sabatini said some motorists had run out of gas and were sleeping in a stranded Greyhound Bus to stay warm.

The Indiana National Guard was bringing stranded motorists from I-64 to hotels in Evansville or the Red Cross offices.

Gov. Joe Kernan declared a disaster emergency for portions of the state and urged a delay in Christmas travel to allow time for roads to be cleared.

The traffic snarl began when semis had trouble getting up hills and rolled back, blocking traffic, police said. A similar problem tied up traffic on a stretch of Interstate 71 in Kentucky.

The Wednesday snowfall at

"We're still stuck here. It's been about 13 hours."

Ken Sabatini
trapped in Ohio while trying to get to Cincinnati

Evansville of 19.3 inches shattered the record for any single day, set Feb. 25, 1993, when 10.9 inches fell. It was also well over the normal yearly total of 14.2 inches.

Paducah, Ky., got 14 inches, more than the yearly norm of 10, and state police closed down a 13-mile stretch of the I-64 in both directions west of Louisville.

Ohio was a patchwork: up to 16 inches of snow in some places, but a combination of snow, sleet and rain in the northeastern part of the state. Electric companies serving most of the state said

310,000 homes and businesses were without power.

In Illinois, where up to 20 inches of snow fell, forecasters warned that wind chills would reach as low as 25 below zero, and high snowdrifts created a hazardous morning commute, officials said.

Cincinnati was looking at about 20 inches before the system, with its high winds and freezing temperatures, moved on.

Parts of Arkansas looked forward to only the ninth white Christmas in 120 years as the storm barreled across the state. As Arctic air surged southward into the Mississippi Valley, a combination of freezing rain and sleet made driving treacherous across northern Mississippi. The Highway Patrol urged motorists to suspend their travel "at least until midmorning," said agency spokesman Warren Strain.

At least seven weather-related traffic deaths were reported — three in Ohio and one each in New Mexico, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma.

In Amarillo, Texas, 3.7 inches of snow fell Wednesday, more than triple the previous record for the date. Hundreds of flights were grounded and others delayed Wednesday at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

Governor recount

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Democrats allowed themselves to celebrate a little and Republicans vowed to keep fighting as Democrat Christine Gregoire captured a 10-vote lead in the final recount of the nearly 3 million ballots for Washington's governor.

After losing two previous tallies, Gregoire is now expected to beat Republican Dino Rossi. A Wednesday state Supreme Court decision allowing Democrat-heavy King County to count 700-plus belatedly discovered ballots will likely widen her margin of victory.

Republicans were definitely not admitting defeat.

Gregoire was not declaring victory — not yet.

Republican officials say they will blanket the state over the next week, looking for Rossi voters whose ballots were mistakenly disqualified, and will ask county canvassing boards to reconsider those ballots.

Slain pregnant lady

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — The woman accused of strangling a mother-to-be and cutting the baby from her womb often faked being pregnant to get attention, even though she had her tubes tied 14 years ago according to her ex-husband.

Carl Boman, of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, told Kansas City television station WDAF-TV on Tuesday that he thinks his former wife, Lisa M. Montgomery, became so wrapped up in her pregnancy story that she needed to come up with a baby to save face.

Montgomery has been charged with the death of Bobbie Jo Stinnett, 23, who was found dying in her Skidmore, Missouri home Dec. 16. The baby Stinnett had carried for eight months was missing.

Montgomery has been incapable of having a baby since having her tubes tied in 1990 after delivering a baby girl, according to her ex-husband.

From The Associated Press



DNA from Nicky, above, a male Maine coon cat who died last year, was used to successfully clone a kitten, right, named Little Nicky, by the Sausalito, Calif.-based company Genetic Savings and Clone. Nicky's owner, a Texas woman identified only as "Julie," paid \$50,000 for his clone.

PHOTOS BY GENETIC SAVINGS AND CLONE/EP



\$50,000 feline clone spurs ethics debate

By PAUL ELIAS
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The first cloned-to-order pet sold in the United States is named Little Nicky, a 9-week-old kitten delivered to a Texas woman saddened by the loss of a cat she had owned for 17 years.

The kitten cost its owner \$50,000 and was created from DNA from her beloved Maine coon cat, named Nicky, who died last year.

"He is identical. His personality is the same," the owner, Julie, said in an interview. She asked that her last name and hometown not be disclosed because she said she fears being targeted by groups opposed to cloning.

The company that created Little Nicky, Sausalito-based Genetic Savings and Clone, said it hopes by May to have produced the world's first cloned dog — a much more lucrative market than cats.

The kitten's creation and sale

reignited fierce ethical and scientific debate over cloning technology, which is rapidly advancing.

Aside from human cloning, which has been achieved only at the microscopic embryo stage, no cloning project has fueled more debate than the marketing plans of Genetic Savings and Clone.

"It's morally problematic and a little reprehensible," said David Magnus, co-director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at Stanford University. "For \$50,000, she could have provided homes for a lot of strays."

Animals rights activists complain that new feline production systems aren't needed because thousands of stray cats are euthanized each year for want of homes.

Lou Hawthorne, Genetic Savings and Clone's chief executive, said his company purchases thousands of ovaries from spay clinics across the country. It extracts the eggs, which are combined with the genetic material from the animals to be cloned.

By JANET MCCONNAUGHEY
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Being fit but fat isn't good enough. Excess weight, all by itself, can take years off your life, even if you get plenty of exercise, a study found.

"There has been some suggestion that if you are particularly active, you don't have to worry about your body weight, about your diet. That's very misleading," said the report's lead author, Dr. Frank Hu of the Harvard School of Public Health.

The study of 116,500 women was published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine and was based on questionnaires used in the Nurses' Health Study, which has followed female nurses since 1976, and on death certificates and medical records.

Women who were physically active but obese had almost twice the risk of death of women who were both active and lean.

Women who were sedentary but slender were 55 percent more likely to die early.

Women who were both seden-

tary and obese were almost 2 1/2 times more likely to die.

"Being physically active did not cancel out the increased mortality of [being] overweight. Being lean did not counterbalance the risk effect of being sedentary," Hu said.

An editorial by David R. Jacobs Jr. and Mark A. Pereira of the University of Minnesota noted that the study relied on nurses' reports of exercise and weight rather than direct measurement, and did not include light to moderate exercise — the form most Americans get.

Dr. Timothy Church of the Cooper Institute, which is devoted to research on exercise and health, praised the findings.

"If you're lean but you're sedentary, don't fool yourself. You're still at risk. You need to get physically active," he said.

A separate study in the journal — the longest look yet at the effects of stomach-stapling and other obesity surgery — found that the weight loss and the protection against diabetes that result are major and long-lasting.

The Swedish study, led by Dr. Lars Sjöström of Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Göteborg, looked at more than 4,000 people, about half of whom underwent surgery.

The other half were advised to change their habits, or got no treatment at all.

Two years later, the surgery group had lost about 25 percent of its original weight, while those in the comparison group weighed almost exactly the same.

Ten years later, the comparison group had gained an average of 1.6 percent. Those who underwent surgery had regained a larger percentage — but were still 16 percent below their original weights.

Many surgical patients recovered from diabetes, and the operation prevented many new cases. Their levels of fats called triglycerides were lower, and their levels of "good" cholesterol were higher.

But trends toward lower blood pressure and lower overall cholesterol levels among the surgery patients were not big enough to count as real differences.

New Sudafed pill aims to curb meth concerns

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — The maker of Sudafed is offering a new version of the cold and allergy medicine without an ingredient often used to produce the illegal and highly addictive drug methamphetamine in homemade labs.

Pseudoephedrine will be replaced with another substance, phenylephrine, in a new product called Sudafed PE, Pfizer Inc. spokeswoman Erica Johnson said Wednesday. Pfizer will continue to offer the old Sudafed, too. In many states, pharmacists keep Sudafed and other cold medicines used to make meth behind a counter.

Kerik resigns from Giuliani firm

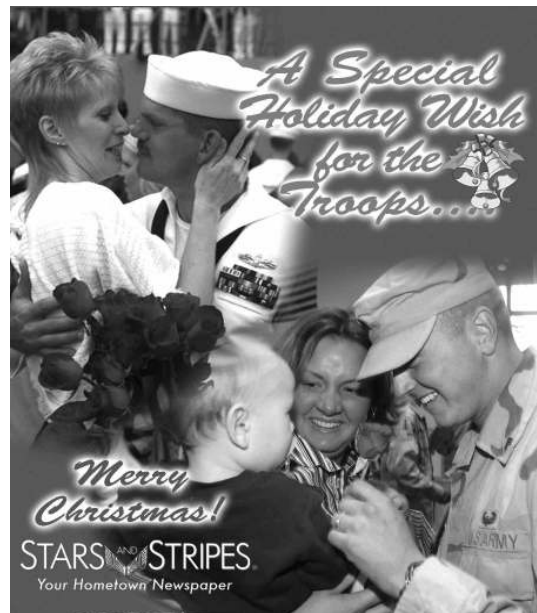
NEW YORK — Citing the "distraction" created by the rash of allegations against him, former police commissioner Bernard Kerik has resigned from Rudolph Giuliani's consulting firm.

The announcement came less than two weeks after Kerik, amid questions about a nanny-housekeeper he employed, gave up his nomination as the next U.S. homeland security chief. He has also been accused of having extramarital affairs and dealing with a construction company suspected of mob ties.

"The events surrounding my withdrawal have become an unfair and unnecessary distraction to the firm and most importantly to the work they do at the firm," he said at a news conference Wednesday in Manhattan.

From The Associated Press

Study: Obesity puts even fit women at risk of death



O tacky tree, o tacky tree!

Museum curator turns joke into a Christmas movement

BY PAUL NOWELL

The Associated Press

BREVARD, N.C. — The guest book was blank on a recent morning at the world's only museum for aluminum Christmas trees.

It was impossible to tell whether no one had been visiting — or if visitors were simply ashamed to admit having stopped at a shrine to holiday tackiness.

What began as a joke in 1991, with a single shiny tree retrieved from the trash, has become an obsession for curator Stephen Paul Jackson. The home designer, 48, confesses to fond feelings for his collection of ersatz trees.

"I really like the retro look of the 1950s," Jackson said as he led a lone visitor on a tour of the museum, which fills part of the lobby of a college music hall in this town in North Carolina's western mountains. "As a designer, I like their simplicity."

When Jackson started his collection 13 years ago, raising his lone voice in defense of the fake Christmas tree, he unwittingly started a movement.

"I have a group of volunteers and fans who expect to see this every year," he said.

Jackson struggles to keep a straight face as he recites the full name of his museum: The Aluminum Tree and Aesthetically Challenged Seasonal Ornament Museum and Research Center, or ATOM for short.

This year's collection includes 30 trees of all



Stephen Paul Jackson, curator of the Aluminum Tree and Aesthetically Challenged Seasonal Ornament Museum and Research Center, is shown with one of the trees inside the museum in Brevard, N.C.

shapes and sizes. Jackson even put a satellite museum on tour by shipping 25 more trees to a friend who is displaying them in Nashville, Tennessee.

In the foyer of Brevard College's Porter Center for the Performing Arts, vintage Christmas music floats through Jackson's treasure grove of silver, green and blue trees. The "Elvis Tree" has photos of the King hanging from its branches. The "Toilet Tree" has copper-colored floats for ornaments and is adorned with strands of pink, yellow and blue shower curtain connectors.

Jackson's first tacky tree was a joke from a friend. Jackson returned the joke by holding a tacky ornament tree-trimming party. When subsequent annual parties outgrew Jackson's living room, he relocated the display, first to Brevard's American Legion hall and other locations. This year, he accepted an offer from the college to use the music hall's lobby.

Despite the absence of names in the guest book, Jackson said the museum averages about 100 visitors per day, many of them attending concerts or other events.

Last-minute holiday buyers get impulsive

BY STEPHANIE

STOUGHTON

The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Debbie Hunt planned to buy a hooded sweatshirt for her son. She got one — plus two shirts.

At the Poesis boutique in Richmond's Carytown shopping district, colorful purses drew Ryan Lancaster's eye. Without blinking, the 30-year-old salesman

dropped \$300 for his girlfriend.

Welcome to the desperate time of the impulse buy, readily apparent the final few days before Christmas when it dawns on many consumers that their shopping days are numbered.

And for some last-minute buyers, this short period can be a dangerous time. Confronted by long lines, time constraints and a sea of choices, they are often tempted to purchase on impulse and then sort out their finances later, consumer finance and marketing experts say.

"It's so easy to let your debt get out of control, especially around the holidays," said Michael McAuliffe, president of Family Credit Counseling Service in Rockford, Ill. "The holiday spirit kind of takes on its own momentum, and you can be almost blinded by the holiday lights. You become overly gener-

ous."

The National Retail Federation estimates that consumers had yet to complete 18 percent of their holiday spending as of Dec. 19, based on a survey by B. Gresearch, perhaps because the two extra days between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year encouraged more people to procrastinate.

For most of the year, people walk around with a mental bud-

get, said Suzanne Schaefer, an assistant marketing professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. But during the holidays, they develop self-control loopholes that can expand when they shop without a firm list and at the very last minute.

One temptation is to buy luxury goods such as Burberry scarves and Fendi purses — items that shoppers might reconsider if they had more time to order gifts online or find a stylish sweater in the right color and size.

Many buyers also reassure themselves that a few furry slippers, scented candles and stocking stuffers won't bust their budgets. But they forget that by the time they finish buying the little stuff, they could have bought an expensive gift, said Catherine Williams, vice president of financial literacy for Money Management International in Chicago.

Seasons Greetings, Sgt. Delbert Jensen

Your friends and co-workers at Noramco want to wish you a Happy Holiday!



The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Plastic surgeons say they're working overtime during the holidays reshaping faces, breasts and tummies as husbands and boyfriends give their loved ones the gift of a makeover.

Kendra Schroeder of Pasadena says her husband gave her a \$7,000 breast job as an early Christmas present, and she couldn't wait to get it done. Dr. Franklin Rose performed the surgery two weeks ago, in time for holiday parties.

"I never had breasts, and I wanted something there," Schroeder said. "It's the most expensive Christmas gift I've ever gotten and probably always will be. I feel very loved that he was willing to do that for me."

Cosmetic surgeons are often busy around the holidays because people use time away from work to recuperate. But this year, some surgeons say they're seeing an up-lift in business, possibly due to an improving economy and strong spending on luxuries.

Dr. Neal Reisman, associate

chief of plastic surgery at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, said staff is working into the evenings and on Saturdays to meet the demand.

"Everybody wants to get in quickly, so we try to accommodate them," he told the Houston Chronicle. "You work as long as you have to work."

Some, like Schroeder, come in for major jobs, but others want touchups to get ready for holiday parties. They get Botox injections to eliminate wrinkles or collagen to puff up the lips.

Cosmetic surgery has been on the rise for several years. Nationwide, doctors performed 8.3 million such procedures last year, up 20 percent from the year before, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

The most common surgeries were liposuction, breast augmentations, eyelid jobs, rhinoplasties and breast reductions, according to the trade group. The most common non-surgical procedures were Botox injections and laser hair removal.

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IN THE WORLD



In a wide-ranging end-of-the-year news conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the plan for elections in Iraq, which he said could not be fair amid a continuing U.S.-led occupation.

Putin mulls if U.S. is isolating Russia

BY VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that he valued the partnership of President Bush but voiced suspicion that the United States might be behind what the Kremlin sees as efforts to isolate Russia and even destabilize it.

With Russia already feeling hemmed in by U.S. bases in former Soviet Central Asia and U.S. military trainers in Georgia, Putin has taken issue with Western and particularly U.S. activity in Ukraine, where the presidential election that sparked a weeklong crisis goes into a third round this weekend.

His emotions came boiling to the surface during a three-hour Kremlin news conference, during which he took questions from 51 journalists, pausing occasionally to sip tea from a blue-and-white china cup.

Putin was asked for a reaction to an interview in which Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said that "for every superpower, Russia without Ukraine is better than Russia with Ukraine."

"If we interpret this [statement by Kwasniewski] as striving to limit Russia's ability to develop relations with its neighbors, then

it means a desire to isolate the Russian Federation," Putin said.

"I don't think that is the goal of U.S. policy," he said, but added he would ask Bush about it when they meet in Slovakia in February. Putin then blamed the United States for a policy on Chechnya "aimed at creating elements that would destabilize the Russian Federation."

The comments were in line with Putin's increasingly combative attitude toward the West and especially the United States. The Kremlin is convinced that the United States is behind a campaign to install Ukraine's pro-Western opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko at the helm of the nation Russia has always regarded as its main ally.

Putin criticized the plan for elections in Iraq, which he said could not be fair amid a continuing U.S.-led occupation. He also assailed the United States for saying that Chechnya wasn't ready for elections even though it was sponsoring elections in Iraq.

"I have strong doubts that it's possible to create conditions for democratic elections [in Iraq] when its entire territory is occupied by foreign troops," he said, denouncing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's plan to monitor the Iraqi vote as a "farce."

London stabbings

LONDON — An armed man went on a stabbing rampage in north London on Thursday, killing one person and critically injuring five others, police said.

Metropolitan Police said they began receiving reports of stabbings outside a train station and on streets in the Edmonton, Enfield and Haringey areas from around 8:20 a.m.

Police said the assailant was driving a car and pulling off the road to stab his victims as they walked on busy streets between 8 and 9:30 a.m.

A 30-year-old man was arrested after police tracked the car's registration number to his north

London address.

Coffee, not marijuana

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Fewer coffee shops are openly selling marijuana and hashish in the Netherlands, the Justice Ministry said Wednesday.

The decline in the number of coffee shops is part of a long-term dip in such shops due to regional laws banning the sale of drugs to minors under 18 and zoning rules keeping such establishments far from schools, said Jitske Parfodé, a Tilburg University researcher.

She said the number of cafes selling drugs has fallen 36 percent since 1997.

From wire reports

Karzai picks new, old faces for seats in Afghan Cabinet

Warlord defense minister replaced by his deputy

BY PAUL HAVEN
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — President Hamid Karzai chose a new Cabinet on Thursday, heeding calls to sideline warlords from top positions — including the defense minister — and creating a new post to oversee the fight against opium production.

Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim, a prominent Tajik warlord and the head of the northern alliance that helped the United States drive the Taliban from power in 2001, was replaced by his deputy, Abdul Rahim Wardak, according to a decree announced by Karzai on Afghan state television.

The new Cabinet was announced on state-run television, but several government officials leaked the list of Cabinet members to The Associated Press hours before the official announcement.

Wardak is a Pashtun who made a name for himself as a commander in the 1980s fighting Soviet occupation, then fled abroad as the country descended into civil war.

Southern warlord Gul Agha Sherzai also was removed from the Cabinet, where he was given works minister.

Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official credited with securing large commitments of foreign aid, was replaced by Central Bank Governor Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi, a longtime Karzai ally. Ghani was likely to take over as chief of Kabul University, the officials said.

Foreign Minister Abdullah and Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali, both popular in the West, were kept on.

However, at least one regional strongman is joining the government.

Ismael Khan, the powerful western warlord whom Karzai removed as governor of Herat earlier this year, was given the position of water and energy minister.

The post is not considered a top-tier position, but Khan's selection is likely to prompt criticism from human rights groups, who want Karzai to crack down on the incidence of warlords and build a more professional political class.

Khan was accused of torture

while governor of Herat, but also was credited with bringing stability and relative prosperity to the region. Karzai has walked a tight-rope in trying to limit the influence of the warlords, whose large private armies are still in control of large swaths of the countryside.

In addition to the top spots, a new Countercorruption Ministry was created, with relative unknown Habibullah Qadri chosen to run it. The position will be closely watched to see if Karzai makes good on a pledge to wipe out opium production. Karzai has recently called for a "holy war" against the multibillion-dollar drug trade, and said it is a greater threat to the nation than the Taliban or al-Qaida.

Karzai also created the new post of economics minister, naming Amin Farhang, the former reconstruction chief.

The Cabinet selections are seen as crucial to how this war-ravaged nation will deal with its myriad problems, including a destroyed infrastructure, a stubborn Taliban and al-Qaida insurgency and a booming opium trade that accounts for three-quarters of the world's market.

Dutch intelligence: Radical Islam spreading through Netherlands

BY ANTHONY DEUTSCH
The Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Intelligence officials warned Thursday that radical Islamic ideology is spreading to thousands of young Dutch Muslims through Internet web sites and on line chat rooms.

The Dutch intelligence agency, known by its acronym AIVD, identified the potential threat in an overview of domestic fundamentalist Islamic movements compiled for the Home Affairs Ministry.

Concerns about radical Islam are rising in Netherlands after filmmaker Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed to death last month on a busy Amsterdam street. A letter pinned to his chest with a knife threatened politicians and other "infidel non-believers."

The 60-page report said eight sources of radical Islam pose a threat to the country, ranging from

Salafist mosques openly preaching anti-Western, antidemocratic ideas to an underground political movement encouraging violent jihad, or holy war.

"Europe and the Netherlands have been confronted with extreme violence," it said, referring to Van Gogh's murder and the train bombings in Madrid in March.

"Recruitment of mainly nonnative Dutch youths for armed radical Islamic holy war is more a trend than an incident. Simply, the international shift [to radicalization] has clearly impacted the Dutch situation," it said.

A move away from traditional physical outlets of Islamic ideology — such as mosques — to individual "virtual" followers on the web makes it harder for authorities to isolate potential threats, the report said.

"Especially the youth have found their way to web sites of radical Islamic spiritual leaders," it said. "These web sites increasingly contribute to the radicalization of Muslim communities in the Netherlands."

Ukrainian security group denies role in poisoning

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's security service on Thursday denied any involvement with the diabolic poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko, the country's top opposition leader and leading candidate in Sunday's runoff for the presidency.

In a statement posted on the Web site, the State Security Ser-

vice said "it has no relation with the worsening" of Yushchenko's health.

"The Ukrainian Security Service did not obtain a single official document that could provide ... a basis for the establishment of the time or the place or the fact of the candidate's poisoning," the statement said.

In an interview with The Associated Press last week, Yushchenko

said he was probably poisoned at a Sept. 5 dinner with security service chief Igor Smeshko and his deputy, Yuriy Satsyuk. Both denied any involvement.

The diabolic dramatically disfigured Yushchenko's face, but he has recovered enough to carry on campaigning for president.

Prosecutors and a special parliamentary committee are investigating.



KEY: Sunny Pt. Cldy. Mostly cldy. Cloudy Showers Tstorms Rain Rain/snow Snow Cold frnt. Warm frnt. Occluded frnt. Staty frnt. Low High

AFRICA

Capa Town	84	10	Mogadishu	89	75
Dakar	86	61	Nairobi	81	56
Freeport	88	74	Rabat	64	48
Kinshasa	86	72	Tripoli	68	48

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	47	33	Manila	86	74
Bahran	72	59	Mexico City	73	64
Beijing	32	19	Montreal	14	04
Bombay	82	62	Riyadh	12	04
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72
Buenos Aires	76	64	Rio de Jan	83	72

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5
Alaska	15	0	Ork	15	5

Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5
Cleveland	15	5	Or	15	5

Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15
Hamburg	35	15	Pdly	35	15

Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7
Nashville	24	7	Pdly	24	7

EUROPEAN FORECAST

BeneLux: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the mid-40s to lower 50s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Mostly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the 30s, Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

France: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the 50s, Tuesday lows in the 20s to 30s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the mid-50s to lower 60s.

Southern Germany: Cloudy with rain. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Hungary: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the upper 40s, Tuesday lows in the mid-30s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 40s, Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the upper 50s to lower 50s, Tuesday lows in the mid to upper 40s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the 30s, Tuesday lows in the 20s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with rain/snow. Highs in the 20s, Tuesday lows in the lower to mid 10s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-50s, Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the lower 50 to mid-50s, Tuesday lows in the low to mid 40s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and daily forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at: <http://www.sembach.af.mil>
<http://www.public.sembach.af.mil>

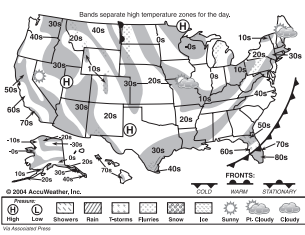
SUN & MOON

	7:00AM	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:03AM	7:03AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:24AM	8:24AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:24PM	8:24PM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:24PM	8:24PM

Full moon 28 Dec 04 Last of 3 Jan 05 New moon 12 Jan 05 First of 17 Jan 05

THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



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Salute to a fallen soldier

I am writing to share a recent experience that had a profound impact on me as a soldier and an American. About a week ago I was redeploying from Iraq to my home station. My team and I had finally gotten a flight on a C-130 to Kuwait. There were five of us, plus three civilians, making a diminutive manifest of eight passengers. But when we arrived at the flight line we were informed that there would be one more.

Accompanying us on our final flight out of Iraq was a fallen soldier. We were advised to speak up if this would be a problem for us, and we would be put on another flight. Of course, we all agreed that getting home as soon as possible outweighed all other factors, and we would take the flight. To be honest, I didn't think it would affect me, but as I walked onto that plane, and saw the casket of my comrade draped on his or her final decoration of the Stars and Stripes, I was overwhelmed with so many emotions it would be impossible to describe.

There were only two that I was able to fully grasp. The first was guilt. It hit me like a wave, almost causing me to take a step back, when I realized that when this plane landed, I would be walking off safe, and never have to return. I would once again see the great country that I had fought for, yet this soldier would never get that chance. The second emotion I recognized came mid-flight. I remembered glancing back at the American banner and feeling grateful.

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Grateful because I knew that for this brave soldier's sacrifice, the people of Iraq will one day be able to experience the freedom we so readily gave up for that very reason, to share it.

When we landed, our comrade was the first to get off. And as we all stood and raised our fingertips to our brow to show our respect for the whole of America that couldn't be there, I realized something. I realized that although the military might not be for everybody, those of us standing there,

as well as our comrade being helped off, know that freedom is.

Sp. Patrick Molitor
 Kitzingen, Germany

The truth is in the stars

It is with amusement and sadness that I read two recent letters to the editor. Two individuals felt the need to defend "the theory of evolution." They did so by attacking the belief in "creationism."

To suggest that creationism is not valid because you can't prove it is partly correct. But that suggestion also shoots down the writer's theory of evolution — because it can't be proven one way or the other. He didn't even understand his own argument. Also creationism is not a great idea of modern civilization, but as old as the hills.

The other writer suggested that evolution was equal with gravity, cell theory and cancer study. This was the amusement I found. That plus the comment about rigorous research for creationism. But it is the individual's obligation to find his own beliefs that make this country great. All I need to do is look into the sky in Afghanistan and look at the stars above to know there is a God.

I would prefer to believe in the God who created me, rather than a big bang or descending from monkeys. But wait, are there still not monkeys out there? Must be slow on the evolutionary ladder.

David A. Sica
 Bagram, Afghanistan

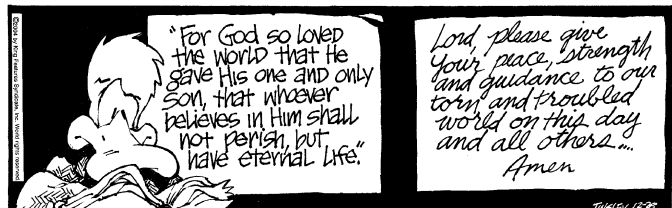
Doonesbury (Dec. 24 and 25)

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



Mallard Fillmore (Dec. 25; for Dec. 24 strip, see Page 13)

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



OPINION

We have met the enemy in Iraq, and he isn't us

BY CLIFFORD D. MAY

Scripps Howard

When the Army of Ansar al Sunna, a group tied to al-Qaida, attacks an American base near Mosul, it should be apparent that Iraq is the front line in the war on terrorism.

When Christian churches are bombed, as they were on the same day and in the same part of Iraq, and Shiite mosques in Karbala and Najaf are targeted as well, it should be clear that the bombers are waging a most unholly war.

When Iraqi election workers are shot dead in the streets, as they were last week-end, the murderers' hatred for democracy ought to be obvious.

Yet somehow the debate goes on about whether those fighting us are really enemies of freedom, about whether it is imperative they be defeated.

The charge that Americans came to Iraq to steal oil is not much heard these days. Instead, the suicide bombers and throat-slitters are romanticized "militants" — or even "nationalists" and "patriots" — who are "resisting American occupation."

When those "militants" do something particularly barbaric — summarily executing civilians, blowing up police stations, beheading aid workers — the conversation never dwells long on their crimes. Instead, controversy swirls around America's failure to control "the security situation."

Then, too, there are those who do not defend the killers but argue that the continuing carnage proves the United States can't overcome this foe. What's the point of a military

machine that can topple Saddam Hussein in a few weeks but has to give Iraq back to his cronies a few years later? Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, much criticized late last year, appears to understand this. A few days ago, he frankly acknowledged the urgent need to "develop a military designed to meet the challenges of this era."

The military we have now, he explained, "is, in many ways, still organized, trained and equipped for the more conventional challenges of the past century, when wars were conducted largely between large navies, armies and air forces."

Our current enemies, by contrast, are fighting an "unconventional" war. The combatants who attacked Forward Operating Base Max outside Mosul were not attempting to win a battle in the conventional sense; they did not hope to seize the camp any more than the suicide-terrorists who attacked on Sept. 11 planned to station tanks in New York and Washington.

Instead, the goal of terrorists is simply to slaughter and, of course, terrorize. By so doing, they mean to destroy our will to fight. Lose the will to fight and, by definition, you have been defeated, no matter how high-tech your weaponry, no matter how many troops you have hiding in armored Humvees.

On a visit to Iraq this week, British Prime Minister Tony Blair succinctly characterized the state of this conflict. "There surely is only one side to be on in what is now very clearly a battle between democracy and terror," he said.

"On the one side, you have people who desperately want to make the democratic process work and want to have the same type of



democratic freedoms other parts of the world enjoy. And on the other side, people who are killing and intimidating and trying to destroy a better future for Iraq. ... Our response should be to stand alongside the democrats — the people who've got the courage to see this thing through — and help them see it through. I've got no doubt at all that is the right thing for us to do."

The enemy in Iraq is brutal, ruthless and, yes, evil. But they are not stupid. They know that every time they stage a massacre, millions of people get angry, not at them, but at Don Rumsfeld and President Bush and Prime Minister Blair and the "neo-cons."

"We have seen ... the weakness of the American soldier who is ... unprepared to fight long wars," Osama bin Laden said in 1998, as he began contemplating his next attack. "It also proves they can run in less than 24 hours, and this was also repeated in Somalia. We are ready for all occasions."

Only when the kind of butchery we witnessed this week strengthens, rather than weakens, our resolve will the barbarians see that the road they have chosen is a dead end — figuratively and literally.

Clifford D. May is the president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.

Laurels for crossing the Delaware are legitimate

WASHINGTON
It's get this straight: The greatest Christmas in American history was not the result of the Germans being drunk or hung over. Gen. George Washington lost most of his battles

George Will



— it has been said the Revolutionary War was won by brilliant re-creating — so let's not diminish any of his victories, and certainly not the one without which American independence probably would have been extinguished like a candle in a gale.

Among the many things that "everyone knows" that just are not so is that the 2,400 men of the Continental Army won the Battle of Trenton, an operation that began on the night of Dec. 25, 1776, because the Hessian mercenaries had partaken too vigorously of Christmas drink. According to David Hack-ett Fischer, whose "Washington's Crossing" was a finalist for the 2004 National Book Award, the Hessians were weary from a week of constant vigilance against attacks by local insurgents, but fought well.

Not well enough, however, to prevent what Fischer, a Brandeis historian, says was "combined, over the next eight days, with a second battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton — the most important victory in U.S. military history. Since the Declaration of Independence on July 4, the Americans had lost every battle fought to make independence a fact. The military disasters inflicted by 33,000 British and German troops in what is now Brooklyn, and on Manhattan Island, contributed to Washington losing 90 percent of his army. New Jersey's loyalty was tilting toward the crown.

By marching his shivering men to the banks of the ice-clogged Delaware River, and making the crossing that became the subject of the most familiar American pointing, Washington risked everything. Had he lost the gamble — had his men been repulsed from Trenton and pinned against the river — the continent would have been lost ... and subsequent world history would have been very different.

In New York, Washington had wept while watching through a spyglass as the British massacred Americans who had surrendered. But Washington, Fischer writes, "often reminded his men that they were an army of liberty and freedom, and that the rights of humanity for which they were fighting should extend even to their enemies." To the American officer in charge of 221 prisoners taken at Princeton, Washington said, "Treat them with humanity, and let them have no reason to complain of our copying

the brutal example of the British army in their treatment of our unfortunate brethren." ... As historian Edmund Morgan says, Washington had "made the war itself an example of what the Revolution meant."

Dining with Washington after surrendering to him at Yorktown, Gen. Charles Cornwallis, who had commanded the forces at Princeton that rushed to relieve Trenton, offered this toast: "Fame will gather your brightest laurels rather than from the banks of the Delaware than from those of the Chesapeake."

Unfortunately, many small historians believe their function is to deny large men any laurels. Fischer sternly reprimands such historians who have "served us ill." In the late twentieth century, too many scholars tried to make the American past into a record of crime and folly. Too many writers have told us we are captives of our darker selves and helpless victims of our history. It isn't so,

and never was."

One reason Americans have made so much history is that they have never believed in History. One of the unfortunate intellectual developments of the 19th century, principally in Europe, was the transformation of history into a proper noun. It denoted a vast impersonal force with its own unfolding logic. ... Marxism was the most consequential doctrine of historical inevitability, but there were others.

Such theories induce fatalism by diminishing mankind's sense of agency. They mock the idea of great people, and the belief that the free choices of small groups could knock History out of its preordained grooves. Such ideas have largely lost their ability to seize imaginations. ... Still, it is exhilarating to be reminded by historians just how radically wrong the historicists were, and are.

George Will is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

Mallard Fillmore



BY BRUCE TINSLEY

YOUR MONEY

Post offices
are slow
but
sales slowBY DANIEL DUNAIEF
New York Daily News

NEW YORK — A breathless Desires Samuel of Brooklyn rushed to Manhattan's main post office Monday to mail out a set of holiday presents.

"I am very anxious," Samuel said, as she wrapped the DVD player, body wash and perfume. "I hope it gets there in time."

Samuel was one of the millions who made Monday the busiest day of the year at the post office. Indeed, in Manhattan alone, the post office expected to ship 2.8 million letters, a million above a typical Monday.

This season, the post office recommends sending cards, letters and packages out of state by Tuesday to make sure people receive the goodies for Christmas.

By Monday afternoon, the line at the city's main post office had 46 people in it, many of them waiting to mail stacks of letters, packages and bags.

Analysts say that so far upscale retailers like Neiman-Marcus have done well, discounters like Wal-Mart have done poorly and midlevel stores like Macy's and J.C. Penney are somewhere in between. All are hoping for a strong finish this week.

The holiday season for "most retailers, except the upscale ones and consumer electronics, was, overall, a bit disappointing," said Kurt Bernard, president of Barnard's Retail Consulting Group.

Total sales Saturday were down 1 percent to \$6.7 billion, compared with the same day last year, according to Shopper's Insight.

That's a discouraging sign when the Saturday before Christmas is historically the second-busiest shopping day of the year — after Black Friday — the day after Thanksgiving.



Ian Morozoff waits in line at the Laurel Hills Post Office to send presents off to his family and friends Monday in San Antonio.

Stores are doing everything they can to boost spending, including deeper discounts and longer hours.

Retail analysts said the increase use of gift cards, to more than 11 percent of total holiday sales, and the Internet are making it hard to predict the final outcome of the holiday season.

Retail analysts said the success of the holiday season is often linked to the country's overall financial health, primarily because consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the economy.

Rejoice about rare,
above-book-value
insurance payment

Dear Tom and Ray:
My beautiful 1993 Chevy Caprice Classic four-door sedan with just 28,000 miles on it — and no dents or scratches — is now a pile of junk. While parked in front of my home, the engine began to smolder, then it burst into flames. Within 10 minutes, the firefighters arrived. They could not open the hood, but boy did they wield their axes! They almost had firehoses look in their

strong circumstantial case that those mechanics were responsible. But without a direct link like that, it's not easy.

RAY: Once a car burns to the extent that yours did, unless you can get Lt. Columbo in there with the forensics squad, there's really no way to tell what started burning first. It could have been a fraying wire that was damaged during an unrelated repair. It could have been a wire that got pinched during a minor fender-bender.

Click and Clack

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

entire front half of my car. They finally pried open the hood and reached the fire. They said it must have been an electrical short. My tears didn't help put out the fire. Although I paid \$18,000 for the car, my insurance company paid me just over \$9,000. It said something about "book value." The Chevy garage blamed the fire on a short circuit, but had no other comment. Is there any warranty covering such an event, and do I have any recourse? — Harold

TOM: Your warranty, in this case, is called "fire insurance." Harold. Unfortunately, that's probably all the recourse you have.

RAY: And remember, you paid \$18,000 for the car BRAND NEW. So getting \$9,000 11 years later is like winning the lottery. Harold. I'd cash the check before the insurance company comes to its senses and asks for it back.

TOM: If you really want to pursue this, if you recently had some electrical work done to your car you might be able to make a

TOM: It could have been your after-market, automatic butt messenger gone haywire!

RAY: Whatever the cause, there was a large, unintended discharge of electricity from the battery, and that produced the heat that started the fire.

TOM: In terms of your settlement, you can look up the "Black Book" value yourself. There's a link to it from our Web site, cartalk.com. I think you'll have your off the chain.

RAY: And, to confirm your observation, the firefighters probably did have a firehose look in their eyes. After all, it's not often that they get to chop up a car with their bare hands. I've never tried it, but I plan to stop at the hardware store on my way home and buy an axe, and then head right to my brother's driveway!

Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk section of cars.com or the World Wide Web. Distributed by King Features Syndicate Inc.

WEDNESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
High	Low	Home	Last	Net Chg
10,253.7	1,008.40	Dow Jones Industrial	10,313.09	+55.46
3,798.84	2,743.46	Dow Jones Transportation	3,798.82	-1.47
25.75	25.41	Dow Jones Utilities	25.75	+0.30
7,157.88	6,171.85	Nyse Composite	7,158.14	+23.11
1,417.89	1,118.28	AMEX	1,407.99	-11.29
1,251.1	1,250.82	Nasdaq	1,257.03	+6.12
1,207.97	1,234.56	S&P 500	1,209.57	+4.12
548.29	548.29	S&P MidCap	551.45	+2.15
648.83	515.90	Russell 2000	648.46	+2.36
11,806.30	10,358.52	DJ Wilshire 2000	11,824.89	+167.37

NYSE				
Most Active (\$1 or more)				
Name	Vol	Last	Chg	%
Alcoa	698,726	25.50	+0.48	+1.9
Amgen	212,879	5.25	-0.10	-1.9
Boeing	100,416	33.25	-0.10	-0.3
General Electric	454,434	41.11	+0.54	+1.3
Intel	194,261	31.00	-0.10	-0.3
Microsoft	1,017,718	33.18	-0.10	-0.3
Qwest	1,017,718	4.50	+0.10	+2.2
United Therapeutics	1,017,718	13.19	-0.10	-0.7
Microsoft	1,017,718	33.18	-0.10	-0.3
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EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Dollar buys	\$1.3822
British pound	\$1.9170
Japanese yen (Dec. 22)	101.00
South Korean won (Dec. 22)	1,030.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrayn (Dinar)	6.9500
British pound	1.9170
Canada (dollar)	1.3442
Denmark (crown)	6.5596
Egypt (pound)	7.2724
Hong Kong (dollar)	\$1.3810/1.3811
India (rupee)	66.8600
Iceland (krona)	104.88
Israel (shekel)	4.3550
Japan (yen)	106.86
Kuwait (dinar)	0.2460
Norway (kroner)	5.81
Pakistan (rupee)	1.0300
Saudi Arabia (riyal)	3.59
Singapore (dollar)	1.6786
South Korea (won)	1,030.00
Switzerland (franc)	1.08
Thailand (baht)	55.00
Turkey (lira)	1,375.00/1.3751

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cents and Sensibility
Money tip of the day

Less traveling stress

CBS MarketWatch
NEW YORK — Getting from here to there and back again can be one of the worst parts of the holidays.

About 62.7 million Americans will be traveling over the holidays this year, reports AAA. That's up 3 percent from last year, or an additional 8.6 million people.

With so many people traveling at once, the key to saving time and money is to go with the flow, says Susan Foster, author of "Smart Packing for Today's Traveler." Foster advises that you prepare for the trip by shifting your attitude. It's going to be crowded. There will be long

lines. "This is the way holiday travel is. Just embrace it," she says.

■ Arrive early.
■ Prepare for security screenings.
■ If you're traveling with gifts, find out which items are permitted in carry-on bags, and which must be put into checked luggage. "People have a 'disconnect' between bringing on something as a gift, and bringing on their personal belongings," Foster says. Your airline won't care if that hunting knife is yours or a gift for Uncle Joe — it still isn't allowed on the plane.

■ Make sure that none of your gifts are wrapped. Pack gift bags for quick wrapping.

PRECIOUS METALS

London close	
Gold	\$440.20
Silver	\$12.15

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	
Discount rate	3.25
Federal funds market rate	2.25
3-month bill	1.25
30-year bond	5.12
Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America	

FACES

'Fat' Alley teams with Jenny Craig

"Fat Actress" star Kirstie Alley has signed a deal to appear in ads for the Jenny Craig weight-management program.

Alley, who has said she wants to lose the weight that prompted her new Showtime series, will star in Jenny Craig Inc.'s 2005 advertising campaign. The TV commercials will begin airing Jan. 10, the Carlsbad, Calif.-based company announced Monday. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

"I had a great time getting fat and now I'm going to have an even greater time losing weight," Alley, 53, said in a statement.

"I had four offers from other companies, but I wanted to go with the ... one that I knew would work — and, let's face it, Jenny Craig's food is hands-down the yummiest."

Alley's goal is to lose more than 50 pounds. The commercials will follow Alley's progress. The Emmy-winning actress, who starred in television's "Cheers" and "Veronica's Closet," will also keep a weekly blog on the company's Web site.

Her Showtime series premieres in March.



Alley

Berlin Film Festival set for February

The annual Berlin Film Festival will open in February with the world premiere of French director Regis Wargnier's "Man to Man," a historical adventure epic that stars Joseph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas.

"Man to Man" is a French-British co-production that tells the story of a group of anthropologists on a trip to South Africa in the 1870s to look for the connection between man and apes.

Wargnier, whose "Indochine" won the best foreign film Oscar in 1993, wrote the screenplay along with Ghanaian-born author William Boyd, festival organizers said in a statement Tuesday. The movie also stars Iain Glen, Hugh Bonneville and Flora Montgomery.

Organizers gave no details of other movies that will run alongside "Man to Man" in the competition for the festival's top honor, the Golden Bear. The film will kick off the festival — the 55th — on Feb. 10, and the event runs through Feb. 20.

Singer: Drugs fun but fattening

Pop singer Robbie Williams said he would still be taking drugs if they didn't make him fat.

"I still be doing it if I didn't blow up to the size of an aircraft hanger, you know, because it was a great time," the bad-boy British pop star told Real Radio.

"Some of the best times in my life happened under the influence of drugs ... and I'm not saying 'go out and do drugs, kid,' but I enjoyed them," Williams said in the interview to air on Christmas Day.

Williams first made a name for himself on the British pop scene as a member of Take That, one of the most successful boy bands of the '90s.

He reportedly fell into drugs after splitting from the group to launch a solo career. His addiction became so bad that fellow pop star Elton John intervened to send him to a rehabilitation clinic.

Asked whether he was confident about staying away from drugs and alcohol, Williams, now 30, replied: "No, I'm not confident at all."

Ashlee Simpson ready to headline

Ashlee Simpson, whose appearance on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" went awry in a do-es-or-doesn't-she lip-synch moment, will go on the road next year in her first headlining tour.

The tour, scheduled to start Feb. 18 in Los Angeles, will include shows in Seattle, Denver, Chicago, New York, Atlanta and Dallas, Geffen Records announced last week.

Simpson, who released her debut album, "Autobiography," earlier this year, will host the West Coast portion of ABC's "New Year's Rockin' Eve" on Dec. 31. The 20-year-old singer also will perform at the Orange Bowl halftime show in Miami on Jan. 4.



Simpson

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

BEYOND BOYS AND BEER



The Donnas want to be known as a rock band, not just a group of girls with guitars

BY SUSAN CARPENTER
Los Angeles Times

HOLLYWOOD — To hear the Donnas, you'd think they spend all their free time pinching boys' bottoms or shoving them out of the way. They seem like a gang as much as a band — a tight-knit clique snapping gum, smoking Marlboros and emasculating every man they meet.

See them outside of their records, and their reputation as Pabst-swilling, sex-crazed party animals quickly disintegrates. Trailing them for an evening and you won't see them putting out cigarettes in men's drinks or writing their numbers on napkins in lipstick.

Members of the Bay Area quartet are just regular girls — best friends who like to sip iced tea, eat candy and watch "The O.C." Most of them even have long-term boyfriends, even if those boys are taking a back seat to the band these days while the Donnas promote their sixth and latest record, "Gold Medal."

On the eve of the record's release, Donnas A, C, R and R are at Hollywood's Bel Age Hotel having a quick dinner. In 15 minutes they'll be heading to "Jimmy Kimmel Live" for an outdoor performance, followed by a midnight meet-and-greet at Tower Records and the official kickoff of what most likely will be a yearlong tour.

Donna R (Allison Robertson) is concentrating on her Cobb salad while Donna A (Brett Anderson) samples a shrimp dumpling that Donna F (Maya Ford) has warned is no good. Donna C (Torry Castellano) jokes about seeing her "good friend" actor Jason Schwartzman, who is a guest on "Kimmel." The entire group laughs, knowing she's met him only once.

Like the image they project on their records, the Donnas like to have a good time. But the devil-may-care vibe in their songs is an act — one that's at odds with their real-life ambitions. Two years ago, they made the leap to Atlantic Records after five years with Lookout, the Berkeley-based indie label that signed them as teens. More mature as musicians and as women, they're now 25 and looking to ratchet up their career. It isn't so easy.

"We're taken less seriously now," says Anderson, a singer whose Sandra Dee good looks are at odds with her sneering vocals. "Every time we get reviewed in Rolling Stone, I feel like they're reviewing our first album. They might like it, but what they say about it is: hair metal. My I like, 'Are you listening to the same album we just put out?'"

Listeners familiar with the blunt-talking, come-hither-go-away guitar rock on their 1999 breakthrough "Get Skintight" or even their major label 2002 debut "Spend the Night" will hear some differences on "Gold Medal." The songs are slightly slower, to compensate for the tendinitis Castellano was diagnosed with last summer.

Slicker than their previous albums, thanks to Avril Lavigne producer Butch Walker, the record is also less venomous. Anderson's vocals don't sound threatening so much as unimpressed. Lyrically, there isn't nearly as much shut-up-and-get-naked sass, but they can still throw a mean punch. On "Out of My Hands," they dish: "I may not be a man, but you're not one either. It takes one to know one."

The Donnas' unique brand of snotty rock defies easy classification, but because they're a girl band — a rare breed these days — they are compared with the few other women who've climbed on to the charts.

"Everyone from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs to Britney Spears to Ashlee Simpson to Avril Lavigne. Anyone who's a female," says Castellano, a drummer who now wears a wrist brace. "Guy bands out there like the Strokes or the Vines, people would never compare them to the Backstreet Boys. And yet we are in that position."

A decade ago, when the Donnas formed a band at their Palo Alto high school, it seemed like radio couldn't get enough female artists on the air. On the commercial end of the dial, Hole and L7 reigned supreme; out left, it was PJ Harvey, Liz Phair, Bikini Kill and Babes in Toyland. Women rocked, and radio loved them.

It's a different climate these days. The Donnas have been college radio faves for years, but they get almost no air time on commercial stations.

"It's funny because I feel like the same thing we were going up against when we were first starting out, we're still going up against," Castellano says. "When we first started out, it was a lot more blatant because the guys at our school were like: 'Girls can't play. Go home and play with your dolls.' Now it's a little more subtle. No one actually comes up to us and says, 'Girls can't play.' They say, 'We just don't really play girls on rock radio.'"

Hours later, the four of them are onstage, dolled up in tight jeans, revealing tops and hairdos fresh from the curling iron, walking the fine line between staying true to themselves and working to win the hearts and minds of a new audience. Performing a cut from their new record, Anderson sings the truth: "Just have to wait and see."

Flu shot eligibility

RI PROVIDENCE — The state Department of Health lowered the age of eligibility for flu shots to 65 from 75, as it anticipates shipments of about 30,000 more doses. The department has given shots to most of those 75 and older. The federal government recommended giving shots to people who are at least 50, but health officials said the state doesn't have enough vaccine.

Freeman to be honored

MS GREENWOOD — Actor Morgan Freeman will be inducted into the Greenwood-Lechore County Chamber of Commerce's Hall of Fame at the annual February meeting. Freeman is a Memphis native but spent some of his early years in Greenwood. Gov. Haley Barbour is scheduled to deliver the meeting's keynote address.

Flat toll in case of strike

OH CLEVELAND — The Ohio Turnpike Commission authorized flat toll rates if workers strike. The three-year contract for 700 toll workers and 200 maintenance employees was extended to Jan. 17. The turnpike director said the key negotiation issue is the commission's request that workers pay 10 percent of health care costs. The toll for Interstate 80 now depends on the distance driven.

New policy for police

WA SEATTLE — City police officers now need permission from their commanders to take off-duty jobs. Chief Gil Kerlikowske issued the policy to respond to conflict of interest problems exposed by officers working at nightclubs with drug and prostitution problems. About 400 of the city's 1,200 officers work off duty.

Costume stolen, returned

VT BURLINGTON — "Buddy" the blood drop is back but his kidnapping still has not been solved. American Red Cross employees in Burlington were frantic when they realized someone had stolen their mascot, "Buddy," a 5-foot-tall blood drop costume that is worn to promote local blood drives.

Buddy was left propped up on a stand outside a bloodmobile in the parking lot of a downtown Burlington grocery store. When a Red Cross worker went back to check on it, the costume was gone.

"I know the girl responsible for him was a little on the freaked side," said Red Cross scheduler Jill McCarter. "I mean, how do you tell your boss you just lost \$3,000?"

The local Red Cross purchased the high-tech mascot, which has built-in air conditioning, about a year ago to attract more donors.

Buddy did come back, anonymously returned to the chapter.

Inmate shot in leg

VA STAFFORD — An inmate was shot in the leg by an officer during an escape attempt outside the Rappahannock Regional Jail, Stafford County Sheriff Charles Jett said.

The deputy suffered cuts and



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

bruises on his head and face, but his injuries were not life-threatening, Jett said. The inmate and the deputy, whose names were not released, were taken to Mary Washington Hospital.

Jett said the inmate was being transferred back to jail in a patrol car after a court hearing outside Stafford when he broke through a protective barrier and attacked the officer, who was driving.

During the struggle, the vehicle went up and down an embankment, striking a rock culvert and causing the air bags to deploy. The deputy shot the inmate in the upper leg, and jail officers helped take the prisoner into custody, Jett said.

Charitable baby shower

NE OMAHA — The children at St. Bernadette School held a baby shower for Shane Edward Kielion Jr. He was born Nov. 15, the same day his U.S. Marine father was killed in Iraq. Mother April Kielion says she wasn't going to celebrate Christmas this year, but her son is because of the efforts of so many people. School counselor Linda Reese says students collected disposable diapers, baby clothing, bedding, gift cards and more than \$700.

Attacked minister died

IN WHITELAND — A 72-year-old minister died Tuesday, two days after being at-



Swinging Santa

Taking a break from delivering toys to needy children, Santa, aka Officer W.G. Smith with the Greenville Police Department, finds time for a little recreation at Glendale Apartments in Greenville, N.C.

tacked and choked in front of the altar by a man who called him "the devil," police said. The Rev. Bill McElroy of Missionary Baptist Church had been hospitalized since the attack, which took place as church members were arriving for Sunday services.

David J. Cooper, 40, was jailed on suspicion of attempted murder and other offenses.

Police said the charges would be upgraded to murder.

"I choked him until I knew he was not breathing," Cooper told police, according to court papers. "I couldn't kill a human being. I was killing the devil."

The two men had known each other for some 20 years. The minister had presided at Cooper's 1985 wedding, church members said.

Fine for gorilla escape

TX DALLAS — A \$10,000 fine from federal regulators against the city over the March escape of a gorilla from the Dallas Zoo will be paid, the mayor says.

Mayor Laura Miller said that she disagreed with the fine levied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But Miller said, after a closed City Council executive session, that the city will pay it to avoid a protracted dispute with the USDA, which regulates the nation's zoos.

Zoo officials have said that 13-year-old Jahari, a 340-pound gorilla, leaped across a moat and wall before going on a 40-minute rampage. Four people were injured before police shot and killed the gorilla.

Rabid fox stabbed

NH HENNIKER — Two Massachusetts men, including one who stabbed a fox that attacked a Christmas gathering, are receiving injections for rabies.

Roy Ely, 50, of Haverhill, Mass., stabbed the animal to death with a butcher knife after the fox leapt out of the woods and into a group leaving a party.

John Allen, 51, of Holden, Mass., was scratched on the leg and, like Ely, is receiving injections to guard against rabies. Ely was not sure if the three other people who came into contact with the fox decided to get shots.

The fox is the third animal in town in two months to test positive for rabies, a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and can be fatal to humans if left untreated.

Security guard arrested

NV RENO — An unemployed security guard suspected of terrorizing community leaders with death threats, hate-laced graffiti and random shootings has been arrested in California, police said.

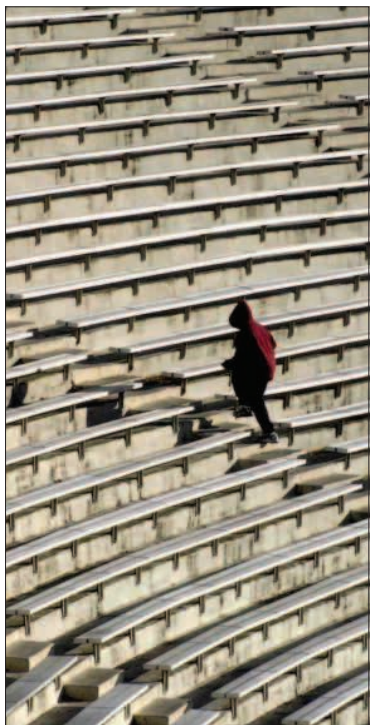
Gary C. Rosales, 43, of Reno, was arrested in Whittier, Calif., where he was being held on seven felony counts of shooting a firearm into homes in southwest Reno. No one was injured.

Additional charges are expected as the investigation continues, authorities said. No motive has been established and bail was set at \$250,000.

The crime spree began in 1999 with death threats targeting the county district attorney, the former Reno police chief and other officers and their families, authorities said.



Light through the fog A low-hanging fog on the surface of Lake Champlain shrouds the lighthouse on the northern end of the Burlington, Vt., breakwater.



Running solo

Exercise for this solo runner consists of running up the steps of Wallace Wade Stadium on the campus of Duke University on a cold Tuesday morning in Durham, N.C.



Scared by Santa

T'Kiyah Ferguson, 1, left, reacts as police Officer Terance Scott, dressed as Santa Claus, enters the Community Child Care Center in Delray Beach, Fla., for a pre-Christmas visit to deliver toys to the children who were eating lunch.



Tubular!

Jason Lombardi, 7, and sister Gina, 5, spend the first day of winter tubing in Page Park in Bristol, Conn.



Football fun

Lee Woods, right, makes the catch as Reese Mardis defends as they play football in Oxford, Miss.



Engineer in training

Andrew Kekel, 3, plays with the switches on the Lionel train display in Chesterfield Township, Mich.

Medic posts diary online

IN KNOXVILLE — A medic with the 278th Regimental Combat Team is posting an online diary from Iraq. Second Lt. Lance Frizzell of Murfreesboro says he hopes his blog, posted at <http://iraq.billohbs.com/>, will ease the minds of unit members' families and friends back home. About 3,000 members of the Tennessee Army National Guard are in the unit.

Enclave may get face lift

MI EAST LANSING — The student enclave off the Michigan State University campus known as Cedar Village could be in for a face lift. City and school officials and area property owners are close to completing a long-term master plan that would bring housing designed to appeal to a variety of people. Five student riots have occurred in the area over the past two decades.

Car crashes into store

WA PUYALLUP — A fast-traveling car smashed backward into a busy variety store, winding up about 150 feet inside and injuring seven people, one seriously.

The 67-year-old driver put the 1980s-vintage Lincoln Town Car into reverse and rammed into the suburban Seattle store, witnesses said. The driver and his wife were not hurt.

Deputies were looking into the driver's statement that the vehicle had a mechanical problem, said sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer.

One person was taken to a local hospital in serious condition, KING-TV News reported. Six other people were also taken to area hospitals.

Crews worked to clean up debris and make repairs to the store, part of a variety and supermarket chain.

Boy's present stolen

VA CULPEPER — A Culpeper County first-grader's new four-wheeler was stolen when he participated in "Shop With a Cop," a seasonal program for underprivileged children, authorities said.

Jacques Simmons, 7, was shopping at Wal-Mart as part of the program sponsored by the Culpeper County Sheriff's Office when the all-terrain vehicle disappeared from his grandmother's home.

"He tried to be a little trooper and not cry, but ... he cried himself to sleep," said Aliene Veneay, his grandmother.

Veneay said Jacques received the \$1,900 four-wheeler from his father for his birthday Dec. 1. She said Jacques is a hemophiliac, so "there are not too many sports and things he can do. He could ride the four-wheeler because it did not go too fast."

The Sheriff's Office has no suspects, a spokesman said.

Bronze bull for sale

NY NEW YORK — The 7,000-pound bronze bull that symbolizes the vitality of capitalism is for sale for a minimum of \$5 million, but the buyer will have to keep it just where it is — in a city park near the New York Stock

Exchange.

"I put the bull up for sale because I need the money to create more masterpieces for New York," said 63-year-old Arturo Di Modica, who created the sculpture 15 years ago and almost instantly unloaded it on Wall Street.

Di Modica insisted any deal require the buyer to donate the landmark sculpture to the city.

Di Modica was inspired to create the 16-foot-long bull as a symbol of strength and hope after the 1987 stock market collapse. It took him two years to complete and cost him more than \$350,000.

Innocent man freed

TX EL PASO — A man who served nearly 17 years for rape was freed from prison Tuesday after DNA tests determined that he was not responsible for the crime.

Brandon Moon, 43, joined his parents, Frank and Shirley Moon, late Tuesday afternoon for a long drive to their home in Kansas City, Mo., following his release from the El Paso County jail.

Asked what he was feeling in his first moments as a free man, Moon told The Associated Press, "Numb. Have you ever had Novacaine? It's a lot like that, just from head to toe."

Moon, a former University of Texas at El Paso student, had been serving a 75-year sentence after his 1988 conviction on three counts of sexual assault.

Throughout his years behind bars, he maintained his innocence and said he never lost faith when others wouldn't listen to him.

"They're listening now," he said.

Moon said he doesn't know what the future holds for him.

"At least in part I'll continue making belt buckles, which has kind of kept me going over the years," he said, referring to his silversmith work while in prison. "What I'll be doing other than that, I don't know."

Confederate flag dress

KY LEXINGTON — Jacquelyn Dix Duty's prom dress created a stir even before she showed up for the May 1 event.

When Duty came to the Russell High School prom in a self-designed red, white and blue gown with the Confederate battle flag as part of the design, she was told to leave.

School leaders, who had heard about Duty's plans to wear the Confederate-inspired sequined gown, wouldn't allow her to enter the prom or even leave her vehicle, her lawyers say.

Now Duty is suing the school district in U.S. District Court in Lexington, saying the school district and administrators violated her First Amendment right to free speech and her right to celebrate her heritage. She also is suing for defamation, false imprisonment and assault.

She plans as well to sue for actual and punitive damages in excess of \$50,000.

Her lawyer said Duty lost many scholarships because she was portrayed as a racist after the incident. Duty's mother added that her daughter graduated near the top of her class in May.

From wire reports

Horoscope

'Tis the night before Christmas and all through the stars, not a planet is stirring, except of course Mars, who happens to be peering in his bags and heading for the adventurous land of Sagittarius. It's a real "ho-ho" of a transit for aggressive Mars, emphasizing the need for excitement, novelty and human connection.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 24). You've been ready for something different for a while now, and one big change at the start of the year sets the tone for your adventure! When you stop waiting for others and take matters into your own hands, you marry, improve your love life or transform an ailing relationship. In April, your improved confidence brings money flowing in.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The bustle and clamor of the season have become distraction in recent days, but now, you're clear and centered with your heart in the right place. Your best creations are made expressly with lots of love for one special person.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). If you done your way, the holiday is bright. Be specific and repetitive with all information you'd like your guests to know. If not, you'll be receiving company at all odd hours, and the events unfold in a haphazard manner.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You have a way of adhering to formality in the most casual and elegant manner! A little of the old mixed in with the new is your recipe for a holiday that makes everyone feel included.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). This is a red-letter day, especially if there's a gathering at your place. Family and friends behave just how you thought they would, but you have a few unexpected surprises planned to jump-start the celebratory energy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The

anticipation of a holiday is for you even better than the holiday itself—and that's why you love night-before-revelry. Evening rituals come together nicely. Your bighearted extravagance is the talk of the party.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your whole being swells with philanthropic energy and good will. Though home and hearth are where kindness begins, theirs are not where it ends. You're fulfilled when you get out and share with the world.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Your senses are turned on and tied to the natural offerings of the season—tangerines and walnuts, the smell of burning logs and bite of cold air. Your job is to help others appreciate things as completely as you do.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your mission is one of outreach. Through the phone and the Internet, you spread your spirited mood to the corners of the globe—or at least the country. Don't hold back! Be musingly loved ones to hear it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You turn even the simplest of tasks—like wrapping a present—into a holiday extravaganza. Why not involve as many elements and people as you possibly can? The more the merrier, right?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your kindness is legendary. You should know that loved ones have expectations of you based on what you've done in the past. Honor your own traditions. It feels like coming home.

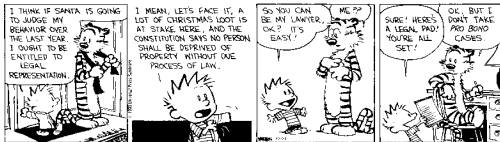
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You like to keep things loose because, to you, overplanning makes proceedings forced and stiff. Be the one to instigate an impromptu game. You'll fill your house with laughter and warm feelings.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your individuality is marvelous. You're celebrating in your own quirky way. A procession of interesting twists and turns in the plot today makes it impossible to do things other people's way anyhow.

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



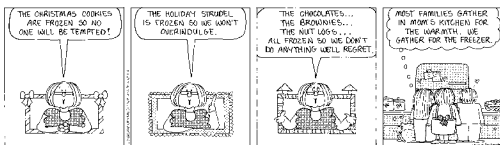
Jump Start



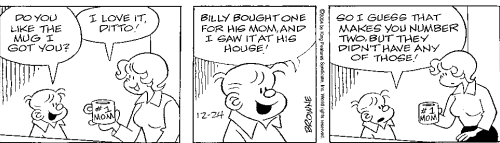
Zits



Cathy



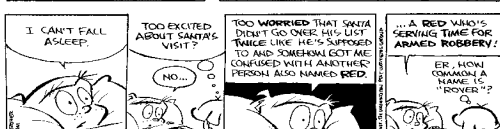
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



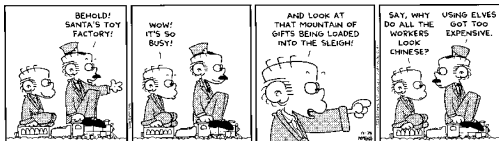
Better or Worse



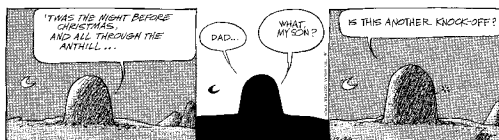
Peanuts



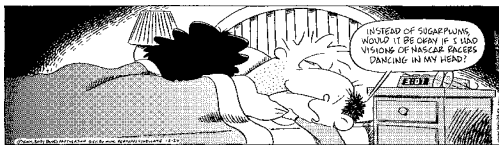
Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



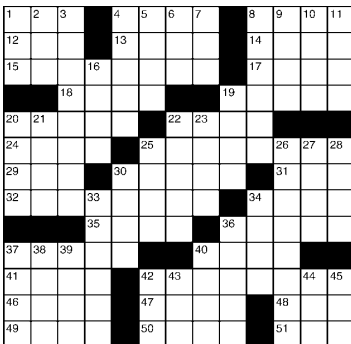
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Brewery product
- 4 History chapters
- 8 Nightfall
- 12 Zodiac critter
- 13 Comedian Chris
- 14 "— Brockovich"
- 15 Anti-Red witchhunter
- 17 Day-shift start
- 18 Hollywood clasher
- 19 Elbow
- 20 Slander
- 22 Garden starter
- 24 Hideaway
- 25 Kenobi portrayer
- 29 Grecian vessel
- 30 "... against a — troubles"
- 31 Sapporo sash
- 32 Nixon opponent
- 34 Prouberance
- 35 Lap dog, for short
- 36 Disconcerts
- 37 Cheaper group?
- 40 Antitoxins
- 41 Square
- 42 "Full dinner pail" president
- 46 Old man of Paris?
- 47 Destruction
- 48 Seine summer
- 49 Cattle herder's device
- 50 Put in the mail
- 51 Adage

Down

- 1 Branch
- 2 Fond du —, Wisconsin
- 3 Host's job
- 4 Gilch
- 5 Decomposes
- 6 Essen expletive
- 7 Firmament
- 8 Strip
- 9 Saharan
- 10 Pugilist's venue
- 11 Dangling site
- 16 Emulsifying agent
- 17 Soft ball
- 20 Run-down
- 21 part of town
- 21 Playwright
- 22 Connelly
- 22 Frighten
- 23 "Ghostbusters" role
- 25 Earth's inheritors?
- 26 Ashcroft's intended successor
- 27 Reed instrument
- 28 BBQ entree
- 30 Cinematographer
- 31 Nykist
- 33 Began
- 34 "Family Feud" host
- 36 Mock attack
- 37 "Edward Scissorhands" star
- 38 Finished
- 39 Nil
- 40 Epidemics
- 42 "— Miniver"
- 43 Prompt
- 44 JFK info
- 45 Evergreen variety

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-24

CRYPTOQUIP

X G F C ' L E F I K L S K
J X I X K J R J K Z X F C, R E L S F T Z S
X Z T K B B X ' G Z F L S K J K

R B R E R B L J K B F J L
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF TINY PARASITES GET INTO MAILED ITEMS, SHOULD YOU PAY MORE FOR SHIPPING FLEAS?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T

Horoscope

Mars transits into Sagittarius, bringing a feeling of global unity — well, maybe unity is a stretch. Perhaps we can only hope for awareness or even acknowledgment of our foreign sisters and brothers, but generous intentions are certainly in place. The realization is that we're not so different after all. It's a perfect transit for festive interaction.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 25). There's simply no room for doubt this year in your personal life or your professional life. Your sensational can-do attitude attracts only the most positive people to your team. A key financial move in the next six weeks sets off a series of events. An idea that's been researched, market tested and refined over a dozen times hits pay dirt in June.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You have a rare case of nerves when you wake up this morning and may feel you've returned to childlike emotions connected with this day. Feel assured you'll rise to the occasion and deliver whatever is asked of you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your earth-sign super-stability is a comfort to everyone around you. You'll be the glue that keeps your group together. Music is the key to creating holiday memories. Tonight features some kind of hootenanny.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Any departure from the normal holiday rituals will bring luck and opportunity in the year ahead. So feel free to make this special day all your own. When you feel fabulously creative and unrestricted, there's more to share.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You use your psychic sense to deliver gifts that go straight to the heart. Sweethearts need relaxed one-on-one time. If you have to sneak away from family in order to get this, go for it, and don't feel guilty.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You've wisely figured out that holiday pro-

ceedings go better when you don't try to control them. This goes double for activities involving willful children or adults who act like them. Kisses under the mistletoe are featured.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Though you have some trepidation, there's nothing to worry about. Your sincere efforts to honor the special relationships in your life bring joy. An exceptional match of style and practicality puts a shine on all you do.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You love a happy homecoming and will do everything in your power to make sure that relatives are on their best behavior. Along those lines, you're an expert at switching the conversation topic when necessary.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You know how to create multilevel fun. Someone is intent on winning your heart with an expensive gift. Only you can manage to keep commitments loose on a structured day. Hot invitations are scarce.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). When you take a detached look, there's something almost humorous about the motley assemblage of merry well-wishers around you. The more eclectic your support group is, the more thoroughly you feel supported.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). In the lights, the music or the general sentimentality of the season? For whatever reason, you see the world through idealistic eyes — and why not for one day of the year? Love is all around you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You've got that overriding feeling that we're all in this together. Material gifts are the least valuable ones you'll exchange this year. Your sharing extends to stories, insights and loving acknowledgments.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Go slow, and savor togetherness. Rituals you attach to this day have more meaning than gifts exchanged. Lasting bonds are formed over shared activities. Let everyone contribute to the fun, and take plenty of pictures.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



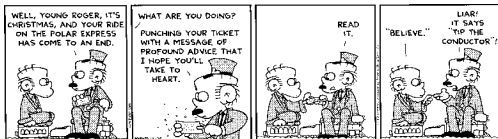
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



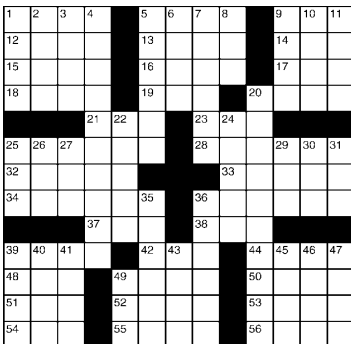
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Java Sea locale
5 Catcher's aid
12 Hebrew month
13 "The Music Man" site
14 Flightless bird
15 Roman historian
16 Put an end to
17 Healers' org.
18 Dnieper city
19 Bill
20 Ball in a gym?
21 Do surveillance on
23 "... little teapot, ..."
25 Suitable
28 Scorching
32 Showed again
33 String quartet member
34 Puts forth
36 On the slate
37 Under the weather
38 Nevertheless
39 Asset
42 Richards or Reinking
44 Writer Ferber
48 Edge
49 Show off the muscles
50 Picture of health?
51 Intensity
52 Traditional tales
53 Top-notch
54 "Undeniably"

Down

- 11 "Loser" singer
12 Jai follower
13 Troubadour's prop
14 Cole Porter song
15 Greenhouse gadget
16 Small bit
17 Trivial
18 Spigot
19 Tolerate
20 Agana's island
21 1984 Sam Shepard
22 Screenplay
23 Leisurely title
24 Flick

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-25

CRYPTOQUIP

H Y I I S G O H P H U V D J F H V
Q V J F F D T I U B N , X J H ' O
S P Q U U H U V D J O Q Y I Q

P Q X D - F H D B N I G G J T D .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I DON'T LOVE THE RIVIERA REGION, ALTHOUGH I GUESS I'D GO THERE AS A LAST RESORT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals N

'Soulmate' not type to commit

Dear Abby: I'm a widow in my mid-60s — attractive, petite and active. I hate being alone. I have a friend I'll call Barney who is in his 70s. Barney's a wonderful dancer and a polished gentleman. We've known each other for 10 years.

About a year ago, our friendship evolved to the next level. We became intimate. I fell in love with Barney and thought I had finally found my soul mate.

Last month, I asked this wonderful man if he was looking for a committed relationship. Barney's answer shocked me. He said he didn't want to fall in love because he'd been hurt too many times. Then he told me he is also in a relationship with someone else! I was devastated. I cried all the way home. Barney still calls every day and invites me out. When I hear his voice, I melt.

My best friend, "Bea," is having a 60th birthday party next

week. She has just informed me that Barney is coming and bringing his girlfriend! Abby, the only reason Bea invited Barney is that she and I both thought he'd bring me. I'd like to call him and ask him not to come and embarrass me. Or should I just stay home? I really need advice.

— **Heart sick**
in San Francisco

Dear Abby



Dear Heart sick: Your "soul mate" either suffers from a sensitivity deficiency, or he's trying to send you a message: "Don't count on him, because he has a girlfriend."

I sympathize with your disappointment, but don't let it stop you from attending the party. While you're there, get the lady's phone number and invite her for coffee. She might be interested to know how much the both of you have in common.

Dear Abby: I am 14. My friend, "Heidi," is well-endowed.

Yesterday, she told me her stepdad pulls on her shirt so he can look down it. He says he doesn't mean anything by it, but it makes Heidi really uncomfortable.

She has told her mom, but her mom just says he's not doing it on purpose, and ignores it. What should I do? Should I tell someone, or let her and her family settle it?

— **Shocked in Fayetteville, N.C.**
DEAR SHOCKED: By ignoring it, Heidi's mother is allowing it to continue. The first thing to do is tell your mother what's going on. Then urge your friend to speak to a trusted teacher or counselor at school about what her stepfather is doing. They are mandated to report it. Go with Heidi for moral support if necessary. Her safety depends on it, because the girl's stepfather's behavior is extremely inappropriate.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 68440, Los Angeles CA 90068. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SOPIE

REMEB

INFURA

CRIMET

Answer here:

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: ACRID RURAL NESTLE LATEST
Answer: Where the loser ended up in the outdoor boxing match — UNDER THE 'STARS'

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrison



A prayer for the Christmas season

Dear Readers:

Today is Christmas, and we hope those who are celebrating this holiday are fortunate enough to enjoy it with family and friends. Here is a prayer that was sent to us over the Internet.

We do not know who wrote it, but this one expresses an appropriate sentiment for the season: A Christmas Prayer

Let us pray.

That strength and courage abundant be given to all who work for a world of reason and understanding.

That the good that lies in each of our hearts may grow by day be magnified.

That we will come to see more clearly not that which divides us, but that which unites us.

That each hour may bring us closer to a final victory, not of nation over nation, but of ourselves over our own evils and weaknesses.

That the true spirit of this Christmas Season, its joy, its beauty, its hope, and above all, its abiding

Annie's Mailbox



faith, may be among us. That the blessings of peace be ours, the peace to build and grow, to live in harmony and sympathy with others, and to plan for the future with confidence.

Dear Annie: You get so many stories about children who are estranged from their parents, or siblings who are cruel to one another. Here's a nice change for you: When my husband and I had our 30th wedding anniversary, our four children asked us how we wanted to celebrate. I suggested they and their families come to our house and rebuild a shade garden structure that termites had damaged.

So they came — all 18 of them. Tents were pitched in the backyard, and every room in the house had someone sleeping in it. Not only was the structure rebuilt, but they also installed a new irrigation system. They washed windows, inside and out, scrubbed walls, dusted book-

shelves, washed and rehung curtains and vacuumed under the heavy furniture. Grandchildren pruned shrubbery and hauled trash. Even the garage got a good cleaning out. Our kids brought all the food, drinks and paper goods, and everyone took turns preparing meals and washing dishes.

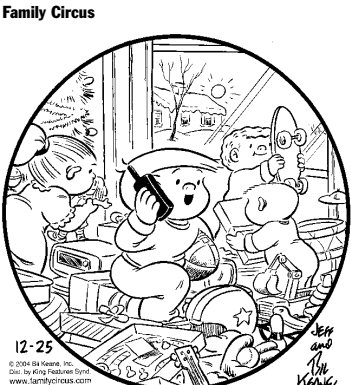
I never heard one cross word or complaint, even when the line to the bathrooms was four deep. At the end of their visit, everyone wrote about the experience in a memory book which I cherish.

If your readers want to do something really special for their parents, they might consider a "work day" similar to ours.

— **Feeling Blessed**
in Whittier, Calif.

Dear Whittier: You and your husband must be wonderful people to have family members who love you so dearly. Congratulations.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate



"You come over and see what I got, then I'll go see what you got."

GRAFFITI

CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL-AND MILLION-DOLLAR BOOK DEALS

MEAS 1/25

Domis the Menace



© Gary Larson
The Far Side



"Oh yeah? More like the three was guys, I'd say."

Non Sequitur



Dodgers, Drew OK five-year contract

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — J.D. Drew is set to join the Los Angeles Dodgers, while Arizona plans to put aside Randy Johnson trade talks until after Christmas.

Drew and the Dodgers have reached a preliminary agreement on a \$55 million, five-year contract that probably will be finalized Thursday.

Drew's contract, first reported Wednesday by The Record of Hackensack, N.J., was contingent on him passing a physical exam.

He will receive a \$2 million signing bonus and a \$9 million salary next season, then earn \$11 million annually in the final four years.

A day after meeting with New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner in Tampa, Fla., center fielder Carlos Beltran got together Wednesday in Kissimmee, Fla., with the Houston Astros, the team he helped get within one victory of the World Series.

As teams and agents worked to get deals in place before the holidays, pitcher Orlando Hernandez agreed Wednesday to an \$8 million, two-year contract with the Chicago White Sox.

In two other preliminary agreements, outfielder Moises Alou got a two-year deal with San Francisco worth about \$13.25 million and right-hander Wade Miller, cut by Houston on Monday, received a \$1.5 million, one-year contract from the Boston Red Sox.

The Yankees, who want to add Johnson to their All-Star-filled clubhouse, meanwhile finalized their \$39.95 million, four-year contract with right-hander Carl Pavano. The World Series champion Red Sox completed their \$25.5 million, three-year deal with right-hander Matt Clement.

Florida, which had wanted to re-sign Pavano, reached a preliminary agreement on a \$750,000, one-year contract with right-hander reliever John Reelding, who was let go by Cincinnati on Monday.

In other free-agent news:

■ St. Louis added left-hander Mike Myers (\$600,000) and kept outfielder So Taguchi (\$550,000).

■ San Diego got outfielder Mark Sweeney (\$575,000).

■ Cleveland agreed to minor league deals with right-hander Jason Bere and left-hander Billy Taylor.

■ Tampa Bay settle on a one-year contract with former Cleveland first baseman/designated hitter Josh Phelps.



J.D. Drew

Two players eligible for salary arbitration agreed to one-year contracts: Expos catcher Brian Schneider (\$2 million) and San Diego outfielder Dave Roberts (\$1.35 million), who was acquired from Boston this week.

Arizona, whose trade with the Dodgers and Yankees came apart Tuesday, said it isn't looking for a new partner to create a three-team deal that would send Johnson to the Yankees. Managing partner Ken Kendrick said the Diamondbacks may keep the Big Unit for 2005.

"We're all in a holiday mode starting today, basically," Kendrick said. "You never know what to expect in the baseball world, but I think right now our focus is to get to our families and let everybody have a little down time."

The Yankees were livid over the Dodgers' decision to scuttle the deal, insisting that Los Angeles had said late Monday and early Tuesday it was going ahead with the trade, which would have sent pitcher Javier Vazquez from New York to the Dodgers and outfielder Shawn Green from Los Angeles to the Diamondbacks.

"After everything seemed to be agreed upon by midnight Monday, the only way it could work is if you have physicals taken by a certain time Wednesday," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said. "And that was not feasible — the time of year we're at, Christmas week, people out of the country."

Beltran and his agent, Scott Boras, spoke with Astros owner Drayton McLane, team president Tal Smith and general manager Tim Lincecum at the team's spring training camp.

"This is a very good step," Purpura said. "This is a continuation of what we all knew from the beginning was going to be a long process."

If Houston doesn't reach an agreement with Beltran by Jan. 8, the Astros would be ineligible to re-sign him until May 1. That makes the next two weeks critical.

"I think we're at a point with this negotiation where we have entertained offers from everyone," Boras said. "We're moving at a much more rapid pace."

Bertuzzi's plea of guilty draws year's probation

The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Vancouver Canucks star Todd Bertuzzi pleaded guilty to assault, more than nine months after slugging Colorado's Steve Moore in the head from behind during a game.

Bertuzzi, who faced a maximum of 18 months in prison, was given a conditional discharge Wednesday, the sentence prosecutor Garth Loeppky recommended after Bertuzzi agreed to plead guilty.

Bertuzzi received a year's probation in which he is not allowed to play in a game against Moore, who was hospitalized with three fractured vertebrae, facial cuts, post-concussion symptoms and amnesia after the March 8 hit.

Bertuzzi also must perform 80 hours of community service. If he complies and meets probation requirements, he won't have a criminal record.

"I have concluded that the imposition of a discharge is not contrary to the public interest," Judge Herb Weitzel said.

Now Bertuzzi has to repair his reputation in hockey circles.

Bertuzzi was suspended indefinitely by the NHL, missing 13 regular-season games and seven post-season games while losing nearly \$502,000 in salary. On Friday, he was barred from playing in Europe by the International Ice Hockey Federation.

Moore, who does not have an NHL contract and still has health issues from Bertuzzi's punch, was not in the courtroom, but delivered a statement that was read before the sentence was handed down.

"I have no desire to interact with him (Bertuzzi) in any way," Moore said. "If I'm ever able to play again, I would ask that Todd Bertuzzi never be permitted to play in any sporting activity I'm involved in."

Tim Dawson, Moore's Toronto-based lawyer, said a civil suit against Bertuzzi hinges on whether Moore can resume his career.

Hermiston settles with German insurance firm

VIENNA, Austria — Austrian ski star Hermann Maier has settled out of court with a German insurance company over the 2001 road accident that nearly ended his career, his lawyer said Thursday.

Karl Heinz Klei declined to give details on the terms of the settlement between his client and the insurer of the German driver who was found negligent in the accident.

The crash in August 2001 be-



Todd Bertuzzi, accompanied by his wife, Julie, arrives at Provincial Court in Vancouver, British Columbia on Wednesday. Bertuzzi pleaded guilty to assault for slugging Colorado forward Steve Moore from behind and driving his face into the ice during a game last season.

tween Maier's motorcycle and the car near his hometown of Flachau left the athlete on the verge of kidney failure and nearly resulted in the amputation of his right leg. Doctors inserted screws and a titanium rod into his leg, and grafted skin from his left arm onto his right shin. For several days, two tennis ball-sized blood clots also paralyzed his legs.

But he recovered, learning to walk again and then ski, despite excruciating pain.

After missing the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, he returned in the 2003 season, tied American Bode Miller for the silver medal in the super-G in the world championships and clinched the World Cup title.

Organizers negotiate transfer of funds to cover shortfall

ROME — Organizers of the Turin 2006 Winter Olympics said Thursday they are negotiating a transfer of funds from a public agency to cover a budget shortfall estimated to be over \$243 million.

Organizers said in a statement they were meeting in Rome on Thursday to finalize a transfer of funds from Sviluppo Italia, an agency linked to the Economy Ministry that promotes business development and investment.

Organizers have been looking for ways to cover the budget shortfall ahead of a vote on a provisional budget for the games.

Report: Russian swimming great Popov retires

PARIS — Four-time Olympic champion swimmer Alexander Popov of Russia has retired.

The French sports daily L'Equipe reported Thursday that Popov, 33, made the decision after consulting with his coach and family upon returning home from the Athens Olympics in August, which he left without a medal, L'Equipe reported.

A retirement ceremony is being planned in Switzerland, where Popov has resided for the past two years, L'Equipe said. The newspaper cited an unidentified source in Volgograd, Russia, where Popov trained early in his career, for its information.

The four-time Russian Olympian won the 50-meter and 100-meter freestyle in the 1992 Barcelona Games and in Atlanta in 1996. He earned a silver in the 2000 Games in Sydney.

Pyeongchang to bid for 2014 Winter Games

SEOUL, South Korea — Pyeongchang was selected Thursday as South Korea's bidder for the 2014 Winter Olympics, winning a second chance to try for the games.

The Korean Olympic Committee called its Standing Committee on Thursday to choose between Pyeongchang and Mju as the bidder for the Winter Games and unanimously voted for Pyeongchang, said Kim Choon-ki, a committee spokesman.

Pyeongchang, 100 miles east of Seoul, bid unsuccessfully for the 2010 Olympics, losing out to Vancouver, British Columbia.

Other cities that have declared an interest in bidding for the 2014 Games include Tromsø, Norway; Sofia, Bulgaria; and Innsbruck and Salzburg, Austria.

Illini gets to brag, but it's no cakewalk

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Illinois had nothing but easy victories so far this season. The top-ranked Illini even cruised over the likes of Wake Forest and Gonzaga.

For the first time this season, Illinois was pushed to the final minute and it was still a victory, 70-64 over Missouri on Wednesday night.

"I'd love to win every game by 20, but that's hard," guard Deron Williams said, shorting his team two points off its average margin of victory. "We needed to win a game like this."

Luther Head scored 20 points and Williams had nine of his 19 over the final 3:19 to help the Illini (11-0) overcome foul problems, poor shooting and a second-half surge by the Tigers (6-5).

Roger Powell Jr. had 14 points for Illinois, which matched its season-worst shooting percentage (42.3) but still won its fifth straight over Missouri.

Illinois entered the game leading the country in shooting at 53 percent and the closest any opponent had come was Arkansas, which lost by 12 points. Those were things Illini coach Bruce Weber didn't think would matter in the "Braggin' Rights" game.

"It's too big of a game, and you add the extra incentive of us being No. 1," Weber said. "They raised their level, they battled, they fought."

Linas Kleiza had 25 points, one off his career best, for Missouri. He was 11-for-13 from the free-throw line and had seven rebounds and three assists. He also helped put Illinois' frontcourt in foul trouble by bullying inside for shots.

"Linas was in an attack mode," Missouri guard Jimmy McKinney said. "His mind was set. I told him they couldn't guard him. They couldn't do nothing but foul him."

The Tigers, down 15 points at halftime, cut it to five with just under eight minutes left and to four on Jason Horton's three-pointer with 14 seconds to go.

Illinois was 11-for-12 at the free-throw line

down the stretch, including two by Williams with 10 seconds left for a 70-64 lead.

No. 7 Syracuse 88, Rice 72: At Syracuse, N.Y., Gary McKnight had 22 points, 10 assists and a career-high nine rebounds and Josh Pace equaled his career high with 22 points for the Orange (11-1).

Michael Harris had 25 points and eight rebounds for the Owls (5-3), who lost at No. 11 Connecticut on Sunday.

No. 8 Kentucky 92, William & Mary 47: At Lexington, Ky., Chuck Hayes scored 18 points and Keleena Azubuike added 17 for the Wildcats (8-1), who won their fourth straight.

Reid Markham and Taylor Mokris each had seven points for the visiting Tribe, who shot 37.2 percent and finished with a season-high 32 turnovers.

No. 9 Georgia Tech 90, Charleston Southern 48: At Atlanta, Isma'il Muhammad scored 16 points and Luke Schenschneider added 14 as the Yellow Jackets (8-1) bounced back from their first loss of the season.

Kurtis Rice had 12 points for the Buccaneers (1-6).

No. 11 Connecticut 87, Cent. Connecticut 59: At Hartford, Conn., Marcus Williams had school-record 16 assists and Josh Boone and Charlie Villanueva each scored 20 points for the Huskies (6-1).

DeMarion Anderson had 23 points for the Blue Devils (2-5).

No. 12 Washington 114, Sacred Heart 53: At Seattle, Jamaica Williams scored 22 points to lead a school-record eight players in double figures for the Huskies (9-1), who won their fifth straight.

Freshman Luke Granato had 15 points — all on three-pointers — for the Pioneers (1-7), who dropped their sixth straight.

No. 15 Texas 97, Centenary 52: At Austin, Texas, Kenny Taylor scored 25 points and the Longhorns (20-2) dominated with defense in the opener of a five-game holiday homestand.

Kevin Taylor had 14 points for the Gents (2-7), who trailed 42-12 at halftime.

No. 18 Louisville 77, Austin Peay 49: Tiaquan Dean scored 16 points and Ellis Myles had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the



Missouri's Marshall Brown has his shot blocked by Illinois' Brian Randle during the first half Wednesday night. Illinoi won 70-64.

Cardinals (8-2) in the championship game of their Billy Minardi Classic.

Dean, who had 20 points in the opening-round victory over 11U17, was selected the tournament's outstanding player.

Maurice Hampton and William Durden each scored eight points for the Governors (2-7).

No. 19 Alabama 76, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 54: At Tuscaloosa, Ala., Kennedy Winston had 24 points and 12 rebounds for Alabama (10-1), which closed the game with a 24-4 run. Aaron White led the Islanders (7-2) with 13 points.

No. 21 Mississippi St. 95, Jacksonville St. 53: At Jackson, Miss., Lawrence Roberts had 22 points and 20 rebounds for the Bulldogs (11-2). Brandon Roberts had 15 points for the Gamecocks (4-7).

No. 22 Cincinnati 84, La Salle 63: At Cincinnati, James White and Eric Hicks each had 15 points for the Bearcats (9-0), who played in front of a home crowd held to about 2,000 by a snowstorm. Steven Smith had 35 points for the Explorers (1-7).

Jayhawks struggle as Simien is missed

By STEVE BREISINDEN

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A nine-day Christmas break will give Kansas some much-needed rest. It won't bring back the Jayhawks' star power forward, though.

Second-ranked Kansas will have to play two key nonconference games and a chunk of its Big 12 Conference season without Wayne Simien, beginning on New Year's Day when Georgia Tech visits Allen Fieldhouse.

"It's always going to be in the back of our minds," freshman guard Russell Robinson said after Kansas beat Wisconsin-Milwaukee 73-62 Wednesday night in its first game since Simien had surgery on his left thumb. "We still need to play with confidence, even without Wayne."

Simien, injured Saturday in a 64-0 victory over South Carolina, is expected to be out 4-6 weeks. His absence was obvious in the 73-62 Wednesday night in its first game since Simien had surgery on his left thumb. "We still need to play with confidence, even without Wayne."

"I don't think it went great, but I don't think it went terrible either," coach Bill Self said.

There were bright spots for the Jayhawks (8-0), whose game against Georgia Tech will be followed in short order by the conference opener and a trip to Kentucky.

Much of the slack was taken up by two of Simien's senior classmates.

Keith Langford scored 21 points and Aaron Miles had nine assists to become the Big 12's career leader in that category.

Still, Langford said, "I feel good because we won — but if we continue to play that way, we will lose Jan. 1."

Miles has 800 assists; Oklahoma State's Doug Gottlieb had 793 from 1998 to 2000.

Miles, who also had eight rebounds in five shy of Jacques Vaughn's school record set from 1994 to 1997, before the Big 12 was formed.

"I'd better have that in the first half against Georgia Tech," Self said.

Freshman Alex Galindo had a solid game at forward, finishing with 11 points and 17 minutes. "I will need to work on playing against bigger and stronger guys. It's going to be hard work from now on, but I like it."

Wisconsin-Milwaukee (6-3), the preseason pick to win the Horizon League, lost its third straight despite six three-pointers and a career-high 26 points from Ed McCants.

The Panthers got to 66-59 on Adrian Tigrert's basket with 3:11 to go but shot 4-for-13 in the final minutes. Tigrert hit a three-pointer with 1:12 to go to cut the lead to 69-62.

Wakes emerges from 'The Pit' with a win

By PETER HERRERA

The Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Wake Forest coach Skip Prosser has been critical of the Demon Deacons at times this season, saying they didn't play to their potential and let teams with considerably less talent stay in games.

There were no such complaints from Prosser on Wednesday night. After No. 5 Wake Forest displayed poise and scoring punch in an 81-64 victory over New Mexico before a raucous sellout crowd of 18,018 in The Pit.

Led by its backcourt trio of Chris Paul, Justin Gray and Aaron Downey, some tenacious rebounding and a defense that harassed New Mexico into its worst shooting night of the season, Wake Forest (10-1) pulled away in the second half.

There were no signs this time of the team that struggled to put away Elmer seven days earlier or the one that survived a scare at Temple on Dec. 13 before pulling out a 67-64 victory.

"We guarded very, very well," Prosser said. "This is a team that's averaging in the mid-80s and to hold them to 33 percent and 19 percent from the three, and to beat them by 13 on the glass, is the reflection of a good effort by our kids."

Paul scored 15 of his 23 points in the second half and Gray scored 17, 11 coming over a 4½-minute stretch after he shook off a hard fall and returned to the court with the Demon Deacons leading 48-45.

"I got me going a little bit," Gray said of the hit he took. "There was a lot of pushing around, so when I got bumped up a little bit, it told me to take my game to another level and to play with higher intensity."

Danny Granger had 24 points and nine rebounds for the Lobos (10-2).

Gray and Paul, who combined for nine of Wake Forest's 10 three-pointers, carried the offense every time New Mexico made a run in the second half. Downey finished with 16 points,

doing most of his damage with 12 in the first half.

"We talked to our three guards and said this game should never get away from us," Prosser said. "They made a couple of runs and the place was ready to get loud, but I credit the poise of my players."

New Mexico twice got within a point early in the second half, but aside from Granger had trouble scoring in the second half. The 291-pound Wake Forest center Eric Williams sat out the final 17 minutes with four fouls.

"I actually think it helped them because when Williams is in the game, their whole focus is to get the ball inside," New Mexico coach Ritchie McKay said. "With one less scorer out there, Paul and Gray had a green light."

Williams scored just six points, the first time this season he failed to reach double figures.

While Williams was in, he, Paul and Gray had a green light. Williams scored just six points, the first time this season he failed to reach double figures.

New Mexico took its last lead at 22-21 with 6:51 left in the first half on a layup by Alfred Neale. Wake Forest went ahead to stay on a three-pointer by Paul and a jumper by Downey.

A three-point play by Granger got New Mexico to 48-45 with 13:12 left. It was at that point that Gray took over, hitting three three-pointers and a short jumper. His fourth and last three-point put Wake Forest ahead 61-51.

"Coach put me in a situation with the ball in my hands and told me to make plays," Gray said. "When you're in a venue like this, you either create something for yourself or you create something for others. And tonight, I was making some shots."

New Mexico, which earlier this season set a school record with 20 three-pointers against Santa Clara, missed 21 of 25 from beyond the arc. The Lobos had a season-low nine assists.

"You can look at one stat and see what happened," McKay said. "We assisted the ball only three times in the second half. We weren't patient."

Image: Youth, wealth blamed for troubles

IMAGE, FROM BACK PAGE

Many of the youngsters coming into the league lack fundamentals, making their first few years an on-the-job training program. Some never learned the life lessons necessary for the adult world, either, put on pedestals at increasingly young ages.

Couple that with the huge salaries players get these days and there can be problems. Teenagers who had to ask their parents for spending money only a year or two ago are suddenly millionaires carrying \$100 bills for pocket change. Tricked-out SUVs are given, and some players sport more bling than Jennifer Lopez.

"I really do think that the perception from the fans is that players are selfish, that the only thing that matters is the money — because the money has gotten so big — and the players don't really respect or care about the fans," said Chicago Bulls general manager John Paxson, who won three NBA titles as a player.

"I don't think that's necessarily the reality, but as they say, perception is reality."

The personal antics don't help. Kobe Bryant no longer faces criminal charges, but he's still being sued by a woman who claims he raped her. Police had to use a stun gun on Michael Olowokandi last month to get him to leave an Indianapolis bar.

Carmelo Anthony has been in a bar fight, charged briefly with drug possession after a friend's marijuana was found in his backpack and seen on a homemade DVD with a man who warns that people who tip police about drug deals "get a hole in their head" — and that's just since September.

Latrell Sprewell said "I've got my family to feed" when he demanded the Minnesota Timberwolves extend the contract that pays him \$14.6 million this year, then got suspended for yelling a sexual vulgarity at a female fan. A week after signing a six-year, \$84 million contract extension with Portland, Zach Randolph had to find his own way to a game in Toronto because his alarm clock didn't go off and he missed the team flight.

And, of course, there's the brawl. Ron Artest, last year's defensive player of the year, has been suspended for the rest of the season after charging into the stands in Detroit and punching a fan he thought had thrown a drink at him, and eight other players got suspensions ranging from eight to 30 games. Five Indiana Pacers are facing charges, and the civil lawsuits are already starting.

"Any professional sport has a problem to some degree when an incident like this takes place," San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "The salaries that professional athletes make can be a problem if players aren't aware of what that responsibility might be, what comes along with that contract. Some players understand it, some don't."

"But to make a broad stroke, 'The NBA or this sport or those players have a problem,' I think, is dangerous."

Even if fans are grumbling, they haven't turned their backs on the NBA. Ratings for Game 5 of the NBA Finals was the second-highest since 1998, and the entire series drew its highest ratings in three years.

According to Forbes magazine's annual valuation of the league, the average franchise is now worth \$320 million, a 14 percent increase from the previous year. Forbes also said teams made an average of \$4.4 million on licensing in 2003, up 20 percent.

"There probably are still some people holding out, saying, 'I remember when people played for the glory of sport alone.'"

But most people are sophisticated enough to understand why it's the business that it is," said Ken Shropshire, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School who specializes in sports business.

There is still plenty about the league that's good, too. No other pro sport is as accessible, with fans seated right at court-side and no hats or helmets to obscure



A week after signing a six-year, \$84 million extension with Portland, Zach Randolph had to pay his own way to Toronto after missing a team flight when he overslept.

players' faces. LeBron James has more than lived up to his considerable hype — on and off the court.

And on the same day the Pistons and Pacers were fighting with fans, New Jersey's Richard Jefferson offered to replace a 5-year-old girl's wheelchair after he learned it had been destroyed during a school field trip.

"You just can't condemn the other guys. You can't say, 'Hey, you knucklehead, I don't want to lead with you,'" Davis said. "You have to pull them aside and say, 'There were years before you who worked real hard so you can be in the position you're in today. Don't let them down by making bad decisions, whether it's on the court or off the court.'"

But one of those guys who paved the way for the NBA's phenomenal success in the last two decades has no doubt the kids will be all right.

It's not easy making the jump from high school to the pros, either on the court or off. Pacers president Larry Bird said. Give the young players some time, and they'll figure it out, Bird said.

"I've got a good feeling that the league, in a couple of years, is going to be a lot better than it is today," he said. "Some of the young players, they're only going to get better. They're great players now, but they'll figure it out and get better."

Expect nothing but mismatch from Kobe, Shaq

The Shaq-Kobe split is a good example of why no-fault divorces caught on so quickly.

They were never going to stay together, no matter how good the winning was. At some point, that mattered less than who got the credit. Now they're free to bicker for the rest of their competitive lifetimes about who gets the blame.

On Saturday, the rest of us start keeping score.

From a promotional angle, at least, this is already a mismatch.

And as the latest game of the century approaches, it's worth remembering that maybe only Don King and Terrell Owens are better self-promoters than Shaquille O'Neal. As a carnival barker, the big man is a genius. Selling wolf tickets is practically his stock-in-trade.

Asked whether he expected Bryant to challenge him by driving the lane, Shaq's first response was, "No. Not at all. It's not something that I have time to think about, because I'm not that type of player."

But given a moment to think about it, he couldn't resist adding: "But of course, when you've got a Corvette that runs into a brick wall, you know what's going to happen."

O'Neal was smiling slightly when he said it, but that little cautionary tale works at several levels. First, it puts Bryant on notice that business is just that — business — and that anyone else who tried to drive the lane would get the same.

Not surprising, it also fixes the differences between the two in terms most favorable to Shaq. It says one of them is fast and flashy — that would be the same guy O'Neal nicknamed "Showboat" not long after they started playing together — and the other is solid; that one is high-maintenance and the other decidedly low-tech.

For those fans who still haven't chosen sides since the breakup, it's an invitation to do just that. And why not? As he reminded the nation during the interview that ran at halftime of "Monday Night Football," O'Neal has the upper hand on the court at the moment, too.

"I got somebody, that other guy, who's just as lethal," Shaq said, talking about Miami teammate and budding superstar Dwyane Wade. "He's a little bit younger, he's got a lot of tools and a lot to do, but he's just as lethal. It's my job to make him lethal-er; it's my job to make him the lethal-est



— if that's a word."

It's not, but O'Neal had no problem getting his point across.

Winning is still about making everyone play better. While his own num-

bers are down slightly this season, Wade's are up across the board — points, minutes, assists, even rebounds. And with Shaq taking Tuesday night off to rest up for the weekend, Wade produced a 33-point, 11-assist performance to lead the Heat past the Celtics, extend their season-best winning streak to nine games and improve their Eastern Conference-leading record to 20-9.

The Lakers, meanwhile, are 13-1 and still smarting over consecutive losses to Washington, for the first time in a dozen years, and Memphis, which hadn't won in 18 tries in Los Angeles, dating to when the franchise began play in Vancouver in 1995.

Their shortcomings are evident, but they're not as bad as the weakness in the middle. Bryant still thinks he can play — or, worse yet, talk — his way out of any jam, and so he tries to paper over the holes by playing at a triple-double pace every night. But all he's proved is that five guys will almost always beat one. That was Phil Jackson's mantra, too, and when Bryant finally tired of hearing it, he simply ran off the coach.

Just before O'Neal met Lakers' owner Jerry Buss that hanging on to Bryant at all costs would come back to haunt the franchise.

"They say I'm getting older. Of course, I am. But can't nobody mess with me," he said. "I'm like 'niet paper, Pungers and toothpaste. I'm definitely proven to be effective.'"

O'Neal made his case once he and Bryant were separated, and now comes his first chance to make it when they share a court.

Everything about their relationship will be different, but in one important sense, nothing has changed.

"Kobe's got all-world talent," O'Neal said a few years back, when it still seemed possible they might iron out their differences. "But you have to learn to play with other people who can score."

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at: jlitke@ap.org

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Keystone State dominance

Nine Eagles, six Steelers are headed for Honolulu

By BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Going 13-1 hasn't just assured the Eagles and Steelers of division titles. It's also made them the leaders in Pro Bowl players.

Donovan McNabb and Terrell Owens were among nine Philadelphia players chosen for the game, the most representatives voted in for one team since 1998.

The Steelers had six Pro Bowlers in results released Wednesday.

Joining quarterback McNabb and wide receiver Owens, who had ankle surgery Wednesday and is out for the rest of the regular season and perhaps the playoffs, were tackle Tra Thomas, linebacker Jeremiah Trotter, placekicker David Akers, special teamer Ike Reese, and one of four offensive starters: cornerback Lito Sheppard and safeties Michael Lewis and Brian Dawkins.

"You just try to encourage all the guys," McNabb said. "It's good to see that Lito, Mike and I have made it and get an opportunity to get over there and get a good feel of All-Star play and to say that they've been a Pro Bowler. It says a lot for this organization, it says a lot for those players and it says a lot for this team."

"We're going to continue this thing on and continue to open up eyes."

The Eagles have clinched home-field advantage for the NFC playoffs. Pittsburgh owns the AFC North crown and had the next-most selections in balloting for players, coaches and fans. The Steelers had six linebackers Joey Porter and James Farrier, safety Troy Polamalu, center Jeff Hartung, guard Alan Faneca and wide receiver Hines Ward. That led the AFC ahead of Baltimore and



KRT

Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb was selected to play in his Pro Bowl. Nine players is the most Philadelphia has ever had in a Pro Bowl and the most for a NFL team since 1998.

Kansas City with five each, while Indianapolis and New England had four apiece.

"We do have a good team and our individual success is a direct result of our team," Farrier said.

Green Bay, Atlanta and Dallas had four each in the NFC for the game in Honolulu on Feb. 13.

There were 25 first-time selections.

For only the third time, a set of brothers made the same Pro Bowl. Cornerback Ronde Barber of Tampa Bay and running back Tiki Barber of the Giants were selected for the NFC roster — the first twins to make it.

The other brothers were Bruce and Clay Matthews in 1989 and 1990, Sterling and Shannon Sharpton from 1993-95.

Peyton Manning set a record in fan voting and was a runaway

choice for AFC quarterback, along with the Patriots' Tom Brady and the Chargers' Drew Brees.

"I certainly appreciate it," said Manning, one touchdown pass short of Dan Marino's record of 48 in a season. "I know it's voted on by my peers, by the coaches and the fans, and I'm proud to represent the Colts there."

The other Colts on the AFC roster were wide receiver Marvin Harrison, running back Edgerrin James and defensive end Dwight Freeney, the league's sacks leader with 15.

On becoming first Colts defender since and John Dutton from 1975-77 to make it two straight years, Freeney said, "You want to make it a consistent thing."

Tampa Bay linebacker Derrick Brooks made it for the eighth consecutive time, joining four others — Jack Lambert, Lawrence Tay-

Pro Bowl Roster

American Football Conference

Offense

Wide receivers — Marvin Harrison, Indianapolis; Andre Johnson, Houston; Chad Johnson, Cincinnati; Hines Ward, Pittsburgh.

Tackles — Willie Anderson, Cincinnati; Jonathan Ogden, Baltimore; Willie Roaf, Kansas City.

Guards — Alan Faneca, Pittsburgh; Will Shields, Kansas City; Brian Waters, Kansas City.

Centers — Jeff Hartung, Pittsburgh; Kevin Mawae, New York Jets.

Tight ends — Tony Gonzalez, Kansas City; Antonio Gates, San Diego.

Quarterbacks — Tom Brady, New England; Drew Brees, San Diego; Peyton Manning, Indianapolis.

Running backs — Edgerrin James, Indianapolis; Curtis Martin, New York Jets; LaDainian Tomlinson, San Diego.

Fullback — Tony Abraham, Kansas City.

Defense

Ends — Brian Robinson, New York Jets; Dwight Freeney, Indianapolis; Jason Taylor, Miami.

Interior linemen — Sam Adams, Buffalo; Richard Seymour, New England; Marcus Stroud, Jacksonville.

Outside linebackers — Joey Porter, Pittsburgh; Taki Soltes, Buffalo; Terrell Suggs, Baltimore.

Inside linebackers — James Farrier, Pittsburgh; Ray Lewis, Baltimore.

Cornerbacks — Champ Bailey, Denver; Troy Smith, Cincinnati; Chris McAlister, Baltimore.

Strong safety — Troy Polamalu, Philadelphia; Ray Williams, Dallas.

Free safeties — John Lynch, Denver.

Specialists

Punter — Shaw Luchini, Oakland.

Kick returner — Adam Vinatieri, New England.

Placekicker — Adam Vinatieri — Terrence Medboe, Buffalo.

Special teamer — Larry Izzo, New England

National Football Conference

Offense

Wide receivers — Joe Horn, New Orleans; Mahan, Miami; Muhsin Muhammad, Carolina; Terrell Owens, Philadelphia; Jason Walker, Green Bay.

Tackles — Orlando Pace, St. Louis; Walter Jones, Seattle; Tra Thomas, Philadelphia.

Guards — Alan Faneca, Dallas; Marco Rivera, Cleveland; Mike Mathison, Philadelphia.

Centers — Clint Kuechly, Chicago; Matt Birk, Minnesota.

Tight ends — Alge Culpmer, Atlanta; Jason Witten, Dallas.

Quarterbacks — Daunte Culpepper, Minnesota; Donovan McNabb, Philadelphia; Michael Vick, Atlanta.

Running backs — Shaun Alexander, Seattle; Tiki Barber, New York Giants; Shaun Alexander, Seattle.

Fullback — William Henderson, Green Bay.

Defense

Ends — Bertrand Berry, Atlanta; Patrick Kerney, Atlanta; Julius Peppers, Carolina.

Interior linemen — LaDai Glover, Dallas; Shaun Rogers, Detroit; Kevin Williams, Minnesota.

Outside linebackers — Keith Brooking, Atlanta; Derrick Brooks, Tampa Bay; Marcus Washington, Washington.

Inside linebackers — Dan Morgan, Carolina; Jeremiah Trotter, Philadelphia.

Cornerbacks — Reggie Barber, Tampa Bay; Dre' Biv, Detroit; Lito Sheppard, Philadelphia.

Strong safety — Michael Lewis, Philadelphia; Ray Williams, Dallas.

Free safety — Brian Dawkins, Philadelphia; Ray Williams, Dallas.

Specialists

Punter — Mike Newberry, New Orleans.

Placekicker — David Akers, Philadelphia.

Kick returner — Eddie Drummond, Philadelphia.

Special teamer — Ike Reese, Philadelphia.

lor, Mike Singletary and Reggie White — who have won a Super Bowl, Defensive Player of the Year and eight straight trips to Hawaii.

"You take it in stride," Brooks said. "We're in a different position. You always want to be humbled by the selection, don't want it to take away from the goal at hand... I'm still at the top of my game. I appreciate the league recognizes that."

Two consistent Pro Bowlers, Vikings wide receiver Randy Moss and Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher, did not make it, mostly because of injuries. Also absent were such frequent Pro Bowl choices as cornerback Ray B. Brantley, St. Louis RB Marshall Faulk, Philadelphia DE Jason Keesee and Oakland CB Charles Woodson.

Curtis Martin, the league's leading rusher with 1,511 yards, was one of three Jets chosen, joining

defensive end John Abraham and center Kevin Mawae. Martin is having one of the best seasons of a 10-year career in which he has rushed for at least 1,000 yards each time.

"It feels good, especially at the position like running back," he said. "There are so many other good talented running backs in the NFL, some of whom I feel have much more talent than I do. I've chosen over some of them, it feels good."

The other AFC running back was San Diego's LaDainian Tomlinson.

The other NFC runners were Shaun Alexander of Seattle and Adrian Green of Green Bay.

John McNabb and the NFC quarterbacks were Michael Vick of Atlanta and Daunte Culpepper of Minnesota.

Tennessee, Cleveland and San Francisco had no players selected.

Dolphins offer LSU's Saban head coaching job

The Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla. — Nick Saban took over LSU's struggling football program five years ago and delivered a championship team.

The Miami Dolphins hope he'll do the same for them.

Miami offered its coaching job Wednesday to Saban, the favorite for the position since Dave Wannstedt resigned last month. Saban told LSU athletic director Skip Bertman he might need until Friday to decide whether to take over one of the NFL's worst teams.

"I know he wants to make as quick a decision as he can," Bertman said Thursday. "But there's no pressure on him to make a fast one, certainly none from the university. So he should think things through."

"The question is: Does he stay here and continue to build, or does he take on a new challenge?"

Saban has previously said he'd prefer to handle a situation resolved by Christmas Day, when LSU travels to Orlando for its bowl game against Iowa.

A Dolphins source, speaking on condi-

NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognosis. (See Page 30 for complete injury report.)

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day's game against Cleveland, declined to discuss the situation Thursday.

"When I started this job, the main focus was to prepare this team to win games, to improve this team, to give them a positive note going out in a tough year with everything that has taken place," Bates said. "That is still my objective."

Bates is 2-3 since taking over as interim coach.

Seahawks WR Robinson returns after four-game suspension

KIRKLAND, Wash. — Koren Robinson said all the right things Wednesday, insisting he has learned his lesson.

"It was a learning experience," the Seattle Seahawks receiver said after returning from a four-game suspension for violating the NFL's substance-abuse rules. "Don't put yourself in certain situations or stuff like that can happen."

Coach Mike Holmgren was vague about what role Robinson will play Sunday when Arizona (5-9) visits Seattle in a game that is key to the postseason prospects for both teams. The Seahawks (7-7) can secure a playoff spot with a victory.

"I haven't really decided, to be honest

with you," Holmgren said, adding that Robinson probably will split time with Jerry Rice. "Hopefully, we can keep them both fresh that way. We need both of them to make plays."

Dallas sticking with Testaverde at QB

IRVING, Texas — Bill Parcells still thinks Vinny Testaverde gives the Dallas Cowboys the best chance to win, so he's keeping the 41-year-old quarterback as his starter.

But Parcells might not stick with Testaverde throughout Sunday's game against the Washington Redskins.

Parcells said Wednesday he's told Tony Romo to be ready to take the first snaps of his two-year NFL career. Parcells is giving Romo "quite a bit of additional work" with the first team in practice this week.

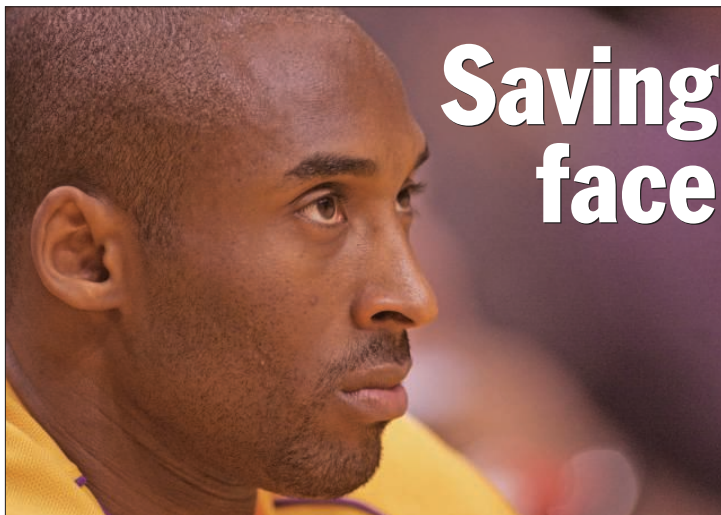
"I'm preparing two guys to play," Parcells said.

Left out of the equation is highly touted rookie Drew Henderson, who was dropped in third-string last week and will struggle this week working with the scout team. Parcells said Henderson might play the finale against the New York Giants.

SPORTS



Dolphins offer coaching job to LSU's Saban, Page 31



Saving face

From courtside brawls to courtroom battles, NBA's image needs a boost after ugly 2004

By NANCY ARMOUR

The Associated Press

At least the "Bad Boys" kept their shenanigans on the court when they were wreaking havoc in the NBA.

Nowadays there are enough mug shots out there to spawn a new trading card industry. Players are doing and saying things that defy common sense, annoying fans with their high-priced whines.

Wins seem to rank only slightly ahead of endorsement opportunities and monster contracts, and those "knuckleheads" Karl Malone once dished haven't gotten a clue yet.

Even the Christmas Day games, once a showcase for the class of the league, have attitude. One game is Kobe vs. Shaq, dueling egos that helped bring down what could have been the NBA's next dynasty.

The other is the first meeting of the Pistons and Pacers since that Nov. 19 brawl that spilled into the stands, one of the ugliest fights in sports history.

What happened to all that love and goodwill created by Michael, Magic and Bird?

"People don't realize the things we do as players can really affect a lot of lives," said Antonio Davis, first vice president of the players union. "We're not trying to take away their own sense of self. If



AP photos

The NBA's image has taken some hits this year, starting with a sexual assault trial against Lakers star Kobe Bryant, top. Police had to use a stun gun on the Timberwolves Michael Olowokandi, above, when he refused to leave an Indianapolis bar last month. The Nuggets' Carmelo Anthony, right, was in a bar fight, briefly charged with marijuana possession and seen on a homemade DVD where a man warns that people who snitch on drug dealers get "a hole in their head."

"You just can't do some of those things."

"But regardless of what organization, corporation you work for, you can't go out and have run-ins with the law, hurt the people that drive your business," Davis said.

"Like everything else in society, the NBA goes through cycles."

This latest one seems to be driven, largely, by the influx of younger players. The average age in the league has dropped by almost a year, down from 27.82 in 1998 to



27.028 this year.

More and more kids are jumping straight from high school to the pros — a record eight were taken in last summer's draft, all in the first round — and those who do go to college rarely stay all four years.

SEE IMAGE ON PAGE 29



No. 1 Illini hang on to win 'Braggin' Rights'

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Jacobs helps lead Bowling Green's blowout in GMAC

Page 27



Drew, Dodgers reach five-year, \$55 million agreement

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